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ABSTRACT

During the last decade non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been increasingly called upon to implement development programs. The question is no longer whether NGOs should play a role in the education sector, but how NGOs are most likely to fulfill their promise to improve the quality, equity, accountability, and pertinence of education in African countries. This paper reports on comparative case studies of the evolving role of NGOs in the education sector in Africa. Four countries were selected for this analysis: Ethiopia; Guinea, Malawi, and Mali. In all four countries, NGOs operate within the education system, many with U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) support. Available documents describing and evaluating donor and NGO programs were reviewed in each country, and semi-structured interviews with key persons at both national and regional levels using identical protocols were conducted in each country. The study focused on four key themes that provide the basis of this paper's main chapters (2-5). The paper is divided into six chapters: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "How Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations Interact"; (3) "Education Policy and NGOs"; (4) "NGOs and Donors"; (5) "How NGOs Influence Civil Society"; and (6) "Summary and Lessons Learned." (BT)

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Evolving Partnerships: The Role of NGOs in Basic Education in Africa.

Yolande Miller-Grandvaux
Michel Welmond
Joy Wolf

Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC.
Agency for International Development (Dept. of State), Washington, DC.

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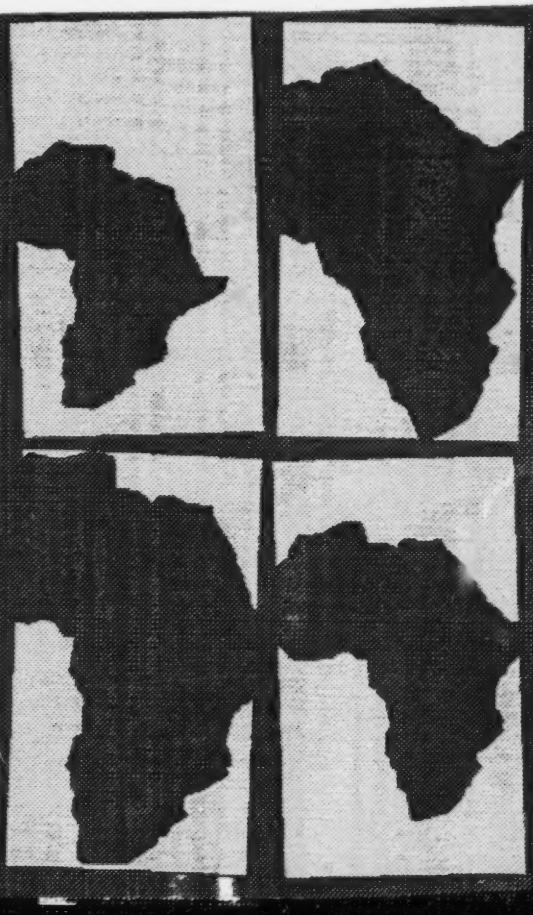
The Role of NGOs in Basic Education in Africa



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Fundamentally, the question is no longer whether NGOs should play a role in the education sector, but how NGOs are most likely to fulfill their promise to improve the quality, equity, accountability, and pertinence of education in African countries.

This paper looks comprehensively at how NGOs have become involved in the education sector: how their presence and relationships with governments and donor partners evolved, what implications their presence has caused for educational systems and civil society, and which contextual factors have affected NGOs' interventions. The study analyzes four major areas of NGO involvement in the education sector: the relationship between NGOs and government, the role of NGOs in education policy; the relationship between NGOs and donors; and the influence of NGOs on civil society.

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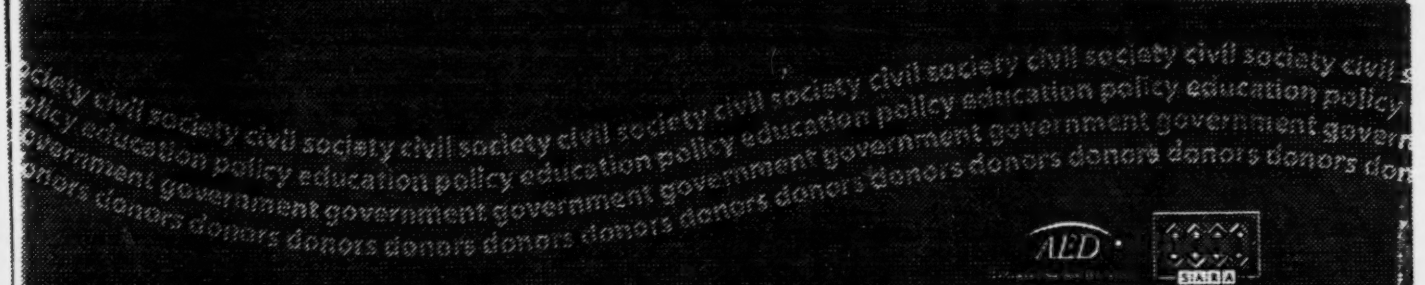
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Yolande Miller-Grandvaux
Michel Welmond
Joy Wolf

July 2002

United States Agency for International Development
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For more information or copies, please contact:

Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) Project
Academy for Educational Development
1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009 USA
Tel: 202-884-8000
Fax: 202-884-8447
E-mail: sara@aed.org

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Acronymns

AED	Academy for Educational Development
ANFEAE	Adult and Non-formal Education Association of Ethiopia
BEN	Basic Education Network
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Government Organizations
CRECCOM	Centre for Creative Community Mobilization
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
EFA	Education For All
GONGO	Government non-governmental organizations
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)
INGO	International non-governmental organization
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PRODEC	Programme Décennel de développement de l'Education (Ten-year Educational Development Program)
PTA	Parent-Teacher Association
SARA	Support for Analysis and Research in Africa project
S.O.	Strategic Objective
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, State of
TDA	Tigray Development Association
TUM	Teachers Union of Malawi
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Chapter I. Introduction

During the last decade non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been increasingly tapped to implement development programs. In recent years, growing amounts of development resources have been channeled to and through NGOs in all sectors. And, in turn, NGOs working to alleviate poverty, improve social welfare, and develop civil society have become more dependent on international donors, leading to an explosive growth in local NGOs in many countries.

This trend can also be found in the education sector, where most major donor agencies have increased the resources allocated through NGOs to implement their education programs. More and more, donors use international and local NGOs for education service-delivery in both formal and non-formal contexts. Most countries in Africa with a donor-supported program for the education sector have NGOs playing a significant implementing role.

NGOs have not limited their education activities to service-delivery. They are also involved in lobbying and advocating for educational reform, working individually and through networks to participate in policy dialogue in many African countries. In the context of decentralization in Africa, NGOs are creating new spaces for civil society involvement in education. Recent Education For All (EFA) meetings in Johannesburg and Dakar recognized the vital role of NGOs in promoting universal and equitable quality of education. The EFA discussions have heralded NGOs' new roles as alternative education providers, innovators, advocates, and policy dialogue partners. And donors have begun to engage in technical and institutional capacity-building programs for local NGOs.

What explains this shift to an increasing presence of NGOs in the education sector? A myriad of justifications and assumptions can be found throughout the development literature as to why NGOs *should* play a growing role in the education sector, many that mirror the argument to increase the role of NGOs more generally. NGOs work at the "community-level," thus affecting social change where others cannot; NGOs can represent and catalyze "civil society," an element many consider critical for sustainability and democratization; and NGOs are simply more "efficient" than other partners.

Trying to discern whether NGO interventions in the education sector have lived up to expectations is a complex task and is more theoretical than practical. This paper responds to a more modest, but ultimately more useful concern. It presents a comprehensive portrayal of how NGOs have in fact intervened in the education sector, how their presence and relationships with governments and donor partners evolved, what implications their presence has caused for educational systems and civil society, and which contextual factors have affected NGOs' interventions. Four major domains of NGOs' involvement in the education sector are analyzed in this study: the relationship between NGOs and government; the role of NGOs in education policy; the relationship between NGOs and donors; and the influence of NGOs on civil society.

The lessons learned from this study are meant to inform those involved in educational development: ministries of education, NGOs, donors and civil society representatives. Why provide more information? After all, most of these actors seem to know what each other does in the field. In fact, they all tell stories of friction and frustration as well as tremendous successes. Often, however, each party's interpretation of each other's intentions and interventions radically differ. Dynamic interactions have taken place over the years and lessons can now be learned on the various roles and interpretations of NGOs and their partners. These interactions and their impact were analyzed across four African countries: Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, and Mali.

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Developing an understanding of this evolving phenomenon will inform donors, USAID missions, and host governments as they design and manage NGO-implemented education programs; it will also assist NGOs themselves to possess a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints of working in education—based on the actual experience of NGOs in the field.

This study was intended to respond to education partners' programmatic needs with a particular focus on selected countries. In addition to this comparative analysis across the four countries, four "stand-alone" country-specific studies focusing on the role of NGOs in Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, and Mali were produced by African researchers and African research institutions in collaboration with the USAID country missions. A fifth one is scheduled to take place in South Africa. Advisory groups were formed in two countries before the study was conducted, to identify partners' needs and concerns and to guide the research so that the lessons learned would indeed provide an answer to the specific questions raised on the role of NGOs in basic education. The advisory groups in Mali and Guinea were composed of donors, international and local NGOs, national representatives of parent-teacher organizations and teacher unions, and the ministry of education. They met before and after the study was conducted and they shared and discussed the findings together. An advisory group was also formed in Washington, DC. This group was composed of representatives of major donor agencies, UNESCO, and international NGOs, and met at the beginning and at the end of the process in January 2001 and January 2002. In all groups, the findings of the study and the lessons learned were discussed and a healthy dialogue on partnerships emerged.

Fundamentally, the question is no longer *whether* NGOs should play a role in the education sector, but how NGOs are most likely to fulfill their promise to improve the quality, equity, accountability, and pertinence of education in African countries.

The NGO Context

Across the four countries, two key variables appear to have had the greatest affect on the specific evolution of NGO programs in the education sector. First, are the objectives and strategies of the NGOs themselves. Second, each country provides a unique combination of social and political realities that have shaped what NGOs can do. These two factors combine to shape the similarities and differences in the NGO stories told here.

On one level, NGO programs in the education sector are quite similar across the four countries. Most are working at the community level to mobilize parents and other local non-government actors to improve conditions and accountability at school levels. Similar participatory methodologies are used by most of the NGOs surveyed by this study, though some notable exceptions are discussed at different points within the paper. On another level, however, NGO programs differ substantially in terms of their overall strategies and objectives. Some focus on providing services where communities lack access while others have more grandiose schemes.

A final and very important element that defines the nature of NGO involvement in education is the particular blend of international and national NGOs found within any particular country and program. Both types of NGOs constitute the field of study for this paper. However, international NGOs have taken up the greatest part of our discussion because they tend to define, more than national ones, the kind of NGO programs that exist within a country—a result of the much larger resource base on which many national NGOs rely. But also international NGO programs tend to influence one another across countries. Many programs in the countries chosen for this study are often quite similar and their design has been influenced by the lessons learned in previous programs.

The differences between the four countries, in terms of political, social and economic realities, explain the evolving path of NGO development. The degree of democratic tradition, of political and social stability, and of economic growth have all shaped what NGOs can and cannot do in a particular country.

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Interestingly, a very important factor defining the relationships between NGOs and different actors within a country has simply been the amount of time that NGOs have been involved in the education sector. The following paragraphs provide a brief description of some salient political features of the four countries included in this study.

Ethiopia is a country fiercely proud of its rich history, language, art and the fact that it is the only African nation that was never colonized. Yet the country's recent history has been brutal: civil war in the 1970s, sustained armed conflict until 1991 and again in the late 1990s, drought, and mass famine in 1973 and 1984 that affected millions and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ethiopia was a centrally planned economy and virtually all human activity was controlled by the state. Beginning in 1991, a new government reorganized the country into nine ethnically-based regions, which have some autonomy but fundamentally depend on the central government's budget allocation. Overall, while the entire political and administrative machinery is still controlled by one single party and civil society is very weak, the idea of democracy and greater openness has expanded the space for NGO activities. Under the previous government, NGO involvement was almost non-existent and strictly limited to relief activities. But, in recent years, the number of registered NGOs in Ethiopia has grown rapidly to approximately 250, half of which are local NGOs. In the past three years, the number of NGOs involved in support to the education system has increased sharply as have NGO activities. But the models of the past are difficult to overcome and Ethiopia is still characterized by the influence and dominance of the state over virtually all aspects of society, including NGO programs.

The Republic of Guinea has spent the greater part of its history since independence under one of the most oppressive regimes on the continent. The Sekou Touré reign was infamous for its brutality, its complete destruction of social organization and "civil society," and its isolation. When Guinea finally emerged after the death of Sékou Touré in the mid-1980s, it had one of the least developed education systems on the continent. National NGOs were not only non-existent but almost any expression of civil society was unthinkable. Considerable donor and international NGO resources have since been mobilized to help develop the education system. Local NGOs, however, have been slow to participate in the education sector, until the World Bank Primary Education project began to contract all its school construction activity through these organizations. Since the 1990s, more than 700 classrooms have been built with support from these nascent local organizations. Guinea presents a case where a landscape virtually devoid of civil society quickly filled up with local NGO activity in the education sector because of donor financing.

Malawi achieved independence from Britain in 1964 under auspicious circumstances. Within weeks of independence however, Prime Minister Banda dismissed his rivals and began a process of repression. From the early 1970s to 1994, Banda held total political control, dispensing patronage and selecting and dismissing members of parliament and ministries at will. In 1993, all international assistance to Malawi was in danger of being discontinued as the donor community pressured the government to stop human rights abuses. The first national elections were held in 1994 and a new government took office on a platform of free primary education. After eliminating school fees, access to education increased dramatically, although direct and indirect costs of schooling continue to be prohibitive for the poorest families and the expansion of primary education is generally believed to have occurred at the expense of quality. Malawi has a long history of NGO involvement in education through religious education agencies that have directly provided education throughout the country. Other than the religious NGOs, very few NGOs have supported activities in education, in part due to the constraints placed upon them by the government. The history of tight state control lingers in government restraints over NGO programs.

The Republic of Mali has a paradoxical position on the African continent. It is one of the poorest African countries, close to the bottom of almost every human development index. Until the end of the 1990s, it had one of the lowest primary enrollment rates in the world. However, Mali has a

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vibrant civil society with promising experiments in democratization. NGOs are numerous, dynamic, well organized, and represent a well-established voice in politics and society. Also, and with particular relevance to this study, Mali is the home of the community school. Although certainly not the first place that community schools have been tried, the Malian experience gained international notoriety during the 1990s as a viable, albeit controversial, alternative to state-financed education. Key to the success (and controversy) of Malian community schools is the support they have received from international NGOs such as Save the Children, World Education, and others in partnership with local NGOs. Among the cases presented here, NGOs in Mali have had the most influence in the development of the education sector during the 1990s.

Methodology

This paper is based on comparative case studies of the evolving role of NGOs in the education sector. Four countries were selected for this analysis: Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, and Mali. In all four countries, USAID has long-standing and substantial education programs. Also in all four countries, NGOs operate within the education system, many with USAID support.

Two types of information were collected. First, available documents describing and evaluating donor and NGO programs were reviewed in each country. Second, semi-structured interviews with key persons at both national and regional levels using identical protocols were conducted in each country. The researchers interviewed representatives of national and international NGOs, donors, government and relevant civil society organizations. Because obtaining a representative sample was difficult, the researchers did not interview stakeholders at local levels; however, they did conduct numerous field visits to project sites to gain a fuller understanding of the kinds of interventions in place.

In each country, the researchers examined the role of international and national NGOs and relationships they have developed with government, donors, policy makers, and civil society and with each other.

Comparing and contrasting the opinions of different actors on the same phenomenon in specific countries was a special interest. By capturing the *range* of perspectives and experiences, these interviews with key actors at different levels of the system identify complex relationships and contradictions, and help develop a more nuanced understanding of the impact of NGOs on the education system. This approach tries to convey the phenomenon of NGOs from the perspective of those who have been intimately involved with their evolution.

The objective of this study, however, is not to "measure impact." This study does not advocate that one type of NGO program is more "sustainable" or creates more "achievement" or "equity." Too much variation exists among the different programs in terms of objectives, methodologies, and contexts. Rather the study examines the types of relationships that typically evolved as NGOs establish and implement their programs, and how these relationships have interacted with overall program implementation.

Organization of the Document

This study focuses on four key themes that provide the basis of the four chapters. Chapter Two reflects on the evolving relationship between government and NGOs in the education sector. It examines the impact of government attitudes about NGOs and NGOs' attitudes about government.

Chapter Three examines a particular kind of NGO/government relationship—when NGOs try to shape education policy. This chapter looks at why and how NGOs try to do this and what the effects and the implications for education programs have been as well as the evolution of education systems.

Chapter Four explores the specific relationship between donors and NGOs in the education sector: why and how donors have turned to NGOs, why and, how NGOs have turned to donors, and what both actors have learned from this experience.

Chapter Five turns to the relationship that exists between NGOs and "civil society" or non-governmental stakeholders. As mentioned above,

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almost all the NGOs have worked at the community level with local actors. This chapter discussed the nature of this relationship and how it has evolved in the four countries studied.

Chapter Six provides an overview of the principal findings, conclusions and recommendations that we hope will lead to more successful education programs and reform efforts on the African continent.

Chapter II. How Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations Interact

In this chapter, we isolated three areas of government-NGO interaction that emerged in all four countries as central to government relationships with NGOs. Each arena is presented as a dynamic model, set in motion by the beliefs and attitudes both governments and NGOs bring to the relationship and the concrete actions each has taken to implement these assumptions. We hope this analysis will guide governments, NGOs, and donors to understand what factors need to be taken into consideration to navigate the dynamics in their own countries. This chapter focuses on ***why*** governments and NGOs do what they do, ***how*** they do it, and ***what*** types of interaction have developed as a result.

Our framework for understanding NGO-government interaction is based on the contrasting perceptions of responsibilities, capacities, and motivations expressed by government and NGO personnel. The structure of the chapter is divided into three major sections, each of which begins with a graphic model. Each model presents: 1) a set of prevalent government and NGO beliefs about themselves and the other; 2) reappearing government and NGO actions into which these beliefs are translated; and 3) types of interrelationships frequently emerging from those beliefs and acts. Each section focuses on a different type of tension: Section A explores differing government and NGO assumptions about what their rights and responsibilities are; Section B focuses on differing notions of one another's capacity to provide adequate educational services; and Section C looks at the differing perceptions of what motivates and limits the educational activities each undertakes.

While similar assumptions and actions were generally found in most of the four countries, government and the NGOs range in ability to implement their agenda in different contexts. The examples in each of the three sections were selected to demonstrate that range of beliefs and subsequent actions. Each section concludes with examples of productive interaction that have emerged in different countries out of specific types of tension. We believe that these dynamics of government-NGO interactions will not be "resolved" or disappear; they are areas of tension that continually define and redefine government-NGO relationships.

A. Legitimacy: Government Rights and Responsibilities / NGO Responsibilities to Under-Served Communities

This section explores the tensions between government assumptions about its rights and responsibilities and NGO beliefs about its responsibility to intervene where governments fail to meet these obligations. Each acts according to a perception of what they should be doing, which molds NGO roles as well as the interactions between NGOs and government.

1. What Governments Believe Are Their Rights and Responsibilities

Governments generally believe that it is their legitimate right and responsibility to control everything that happens in their country. Although government personnel often talk about partnerships with NGOs, they believe that the relationship *should* be government regulating NGOs. Education is, in part, about social and political control, so government reluctance to allow NGOs to work in this field is understandable. As a consequence, when NGOs work in this sector, they inevitably require some sort of accommodation with government. The amount of space allowed to NGOs in any given country is determined by political considerations as well as by any calculation of the contribution of NGOs to economic and social development. The degree to which governments do or do not actually regulate NGOs depends upon their politics, economic situation, and historical relationship with NGOs. Among the four study countries a wide range exists in the degree of government determination

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over NGOs and their activities. In Mali, the government talks of its partnerships with NGOs, engages in joint educational planning with NGOs, and seldom exercises any limiting power over NGO programs. In Ethiopia, the government has deregistered, dissolved, or prevented NGOs from continuing their activities.[1] Many government officials interviewed for this study expressed considerable vehemence when discussing circumstances when NGOs representatives ignored their authority or overstepped perceived boundaries. Whatever the reason government officials convey for wanting to control NGO activity in the education sector, in each country in our study a sustained tension exists over the legitimacy of NGO interventions.

2. How Governments Regulate NGOs

License. Although differences exist in degree and techniques, all four governments attempt to control NGO activities. NGOs are required to register in all four countries. In Mali, the government must complete an NGO's registration within three months from the time of application or the NGO is automatically registered. In Malawi, the process of registration can be slow, difficult and expensive. In Ethiopia, every NGO interviewed expressed how difficult it was to register. NGOs register through the national Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC), because NGOs previously worked in emergency disaster relief. The process is complex and not transparent. First, the NGO is assigned to a geographic area. Then the NGO must get the local education office to write supporting the proposed activities. The NGO must then sign an agreement with the DPPC in Addis Ababa, which can require it to do things such as conduct a base line survey or get a letter from a donor describing support. Registration with DPPC is for three years, but NGOs must also register with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), which lasts for only one year. The MOJ has been known to require members of the NGO's board be acceptable to them. The registration route is so slow and expensive, due to the need to travel and for support staff, that local NGOs often cannot survive.[2] The registration process gives international NGOs an advantage over local NGOs because they often operate under memoranda of agreement with donors and the ministry, which allows them to avoid registering. International NGOs also generally find it easier to register because they have more money behind them and there is not the suspicion that they are tied to local politics. Since the Ministry of Education (MOE) does not review NGO plans as part of the registration process, it is often unaware of education activities being undertaken by NGOs, leading to complaints from both government and NGOs about the lack of a mechanism for coherent planning.

Being a registered NGO is very important for an organization to have access to donor, government and even community resources. In Guinea, for example, only registered NGOs can bid on World Bank school construction contracts. Although the requirements for registration are not particularly stringent compared to those in Ethiopia, they still favor larger, better established organizations with good connections in the capital.

Governments also enact laws that either deliberately or inadvertently limit NGO freedom of action. The government in Malawi had allowed church NGOs to work in education for decades, but, with democratization in 1994, international NGOs and local NGOs began to emerge. As one government official said, "now there is a need to control them…closer consultation is needed so that the ministry is fully aware of what is happening on the ground." This year Malawi's Parliament passed a new Non-Governmental Organizations Act, which will create a NGO Registration Board, with the members selected by the government, to oversee NGO activities. A precondition for NGO registration will be that the NGO must be a member of a government-sponsored umbrella organization and have letters of permission from the appropriate ministry, indicating the sectors in which the NGO will be allowed to operate. Each year, NGOs will have to account for all activities to the Board and will be audited. NGOs have accused the government of

[1] In 1995, the government of Ethiopia nullified 45 NGOs that had been registered because they were said not to have begun their activities. In early 2001, 12 NGOs, both international and local, were "deregistered" for not completing everything in their plans and becoming involved in income generation activities.

[2] For example, of the 110 NGOs that began the registration process in the SNNP region during the late 1990s, only 80 completed the process.

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imposing unnecessary restrictions on them through this law, lobbying both Parliament and the president to prevent it from being passed.

Not all laws that constrain NGO programs were initially written for that purpose, but they can act to do so until policy change occurs. In Ethiopia, each region receives a general, block grant type of funding from the central government. In an effort to promote equity among the regions, any money brought into one region by an NGO is supposed to be subtracted from the total amount sent to that region by the government. Obviously, regional governments are not eager to give up funding for an NGO to set up an activity within their region. One regional government prevented a World Learning program from starting for almost a year; it only began after USAID established an "incentive fund" to help offset the loss in national funding which the region would suffer. Although this policy continues to exist, over the last few years, as acceptance for NGOs has grown, it has tended to be increasingly overlooked.

Area of Operation. Although governments in all four countries want to control education activities, they have realized that they cannot do everything themselves. Aside from the more philosophical concerns regarding the role of government in society and in the education sector, more pragmatic constraints exist—governments do not have the resources necessary to deliver the depth or scope of education coverage mandated. A number of government officials indicated that one reason the NGOs were "allowed" to function in certain regions or take on certain educational activities was because government could not because of structural adjustment and/or economic crisis. Most governments find it hard to admit that they cannot fill all the gaps. One way governments can feel that they are meeting their responsibilities and yet let NGOs take on some education burdens is for the government to limit NGO programs by directing where, geographically, and what type of activities NGOs can operate. For example, the licensing process in Ethiopia tightly controls the district in which each NGO has permission to work. When Save the Children first began its community school program in Mali, it was told by the government to set up its pilot schools on the periphery of the country, far away from centers of power and in regions that are difficult and expensive for the government to reach.

The governments in all four countries expressed preferences for NGO involvement in education-related activities not generally considered to be part of government responsibility. Most educational systems run from the central MOE, through regional and district offices, to the school, but do not extend to the community beyond the school.[3] Consequently, NGOs are almost always encouraged to engage in social mobilization or "sensitization" programs, an activity usually beyond the current scope of government responsibility. Many, and possibly most, NGO programs in education have been designed to support formal education through community mobilization or school committee and PTA training. Because governments tend to focus on broader access to education, they are also usually more willing to let NGOs grapple with issues such as girls' education and quality of education.

Although "ceding" certain domains of activity to NGOs is often pragmatic, interviewees insist that government must decide where and how NGOs are allowed to function. Government officials were annoyed when they felt NGOs trespassed geographically or technically on their program. Although government is often obliged to allow NGOs to play a certain role, officials wished to determine where and how the NGO could work.

Standards. Rather than keeping NGOs out of the country, the sector, or a certain type of activity, governments often control NGOs through adherence to educational standards. Because standards are often subject to interpretation and change, and may or may not be applied, they are difficult for NGOs to circumvent. NGOs in education most often encounter government standards in community school activities. However, government standards for teacher recruitment and teacher training, and for selecting the schools to receive support, have influenced NGO programs. The domains where NGOs are most constrained by the government are meeting the standards for school construction, curricula, teacher qualifications, and,

[3] This has not always been the case. Until the 1980s, many governments saw working with communities to increase their support for education as part of their role.

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less frequently, school committee or parent organization membership. The issues of standards will be discussed more completely in the next section.

3. What NGOs Believe Are Their Responsibilities

Most international and local NGOs work close to communities, especially disadvantaged communities, because that is where they see the most need for their assistance. The institutional and financial capacity of African governments can no longer serve the most difficult to reach areas of the countries. As a consequence, NGOs have often established their programs in those parts of the country where government cannot or will not supply services. NGOs believe that they have a legitimate right to intervene where governments have failed to meet their commitments to communities.

In addition, international NGOs seek to empower communities as a way to strengthen them and to improve access to and quality of education. Many NGOs working in education today began through integrated community development programs, which generally included a literacy component, or sponsorship of children. Working in adult literacy often led them to work with out-of-school children in the same communities. Another route many NGOs have followed into the education sector has been through social mobilization, an area where NGOs have worked since the 1960s. The basic goal of strengthening communities—to assist them to secure needed resources and to participate in the civil society of their country—continues to influence the types of programs that NGOs implement in education. NGOs focus most of their activities in underserved communities not only because this is an area where they are less likely to compete with government, but also because it is where they believe they should be operating. What has come to define their niche in the education sector is partly the product of where they have seen an absence of government.

4. How NGOs Work in Communities

Resources. Most NGOs began working in communities to supply resources, sometimes in the form of disaster relief. Among the NGOs involved in education activities in the countries studied, all bring resources with them to the communities within which they work. The resources are most apparent in the case of community schools, where NGOs might supply concrete things such as tin roofs and teacher salaries. Local NGOs and their proximity to a community serve as a conduit through which resources from donor/international NGO-supported programs can flow to the community. In all cases, NGOs bring their skills and experience into communities, shaping experiences of change in ways that can provide models for future community activities.

Community Participation. For governments, community participation in education most often means supplying resources, both funding and labor, to support local schooling. The World Bank program in Guinea shows how NGOs have mobilized communities to provide counterpart funds for school construction grants. Initially most mobilization or sensitization campaigns in education focused on encouraging parents to provide resources to create and support educational needs and to send their children, especially girls, to school. For example, Plan Guinea, an affiliate of Plan International, has supported the girls education unit of the MOE through several sensitization campaigns at both national and local levels. Increasingly NGO mobilization of communities has expanded to other areas, such as assisting communities to assume responsibility for improving school quality. The methodologies for working in a community have also begun to change, moving increasingly away from telling the members of the community what they should do, to involving them in decision-making activities. More participatory approaches, which include facilitating community discussions and negotiations to decide what their problems are, how they might be solved, and how to implement those solutions, are being used by NGOs, in part because they better support the double goal of most NGOs—improving education and strengthening civil society.[4] In Malawi, the Centre for Creative

[4] Their role in strengthening civil society will be discussed more completely in Chapter V.

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Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) works with communities using a wide range of participatory techniques. CRECCOM began working in girls' education and has expanded its activities to education quality and HIV/AIDS.

Capacity Building. NGOs also assist in creating or training school committees and/or parent-teacher associations (PTAs), organizations through which communities can gain control of their own schools. In Mali, World Education's program is based on two hypotheses. First, it asserts that it can transform the nature of parents' associations in Mali to be more participatory, democratic, accountable, and capable of representing the interests of parents' vis-à-vis the education system. Second, it claims that changing the quality of these associations will have a positive impact on school access, quality, and equity. In Guinea, a similar World Education program only works with the parents' associations of government schools. In Ethiopia, World Learning and Tigray Development Association have implemented programs to support improvement in educational quality, girls' participation, and community involvement through building the capacity and motivation of school management committees.

5. How Government Regulation and NGO Community Focus Interact

Government and NGOs can hold compatible beliefs. For example, government would like NGOs to work with marginal populations or on the periphery of the society; this is just where NGOs believe that they should be operating. Government would like NGOs to engage in activities that fall outside the educational domain; most NGOs believe that one of their primary goals should be to assist and strengthen communities. Programs that fit within these desires make everyone happy. However, as the following examples show, the impacts of such programs remain on the edges of the education systems and are unlikely to create changes in the systems themselves.

Government-Controlled NGO Activities. In 1994, upon urging from the World Bank, the government of Guinea adopted a new policy for classroom construction. Rather than relying on local entrepreneurs, the Guinean government decided to contract with local NGOs. The Guineans and the World Bank had several reasons for shifting strategies. First, using local entrepreneurs proved to be costly and unreliable. The government and the World Bank believed that local NGOs were more accountable and efficient. Local NGOs were also thought to be capable of "mobilizing community participation" in school construction. Mobilization has meant that communities provide funding or in-kind resources to the construction efforts. In many cases, communities also received some sort of training, in school maintenance for example. Also, as part of the "mobilization" process, NGOs supported local publicity campaigns to promote the importance of schooling and the advantages to contributing to the program. This approach has been considered a resounding success by government and donors. The government's objectives regarding this program were realized—more and better schools were established with the same resources. In fact, the World Bank project exceeded its construction target by more than 50 percent. The local NGOs that have contracted with government formed a clear, well-defined relationship with the government and few opportunities or reasons exist for conflict, competition, or misunderstanding.

NGO Activities in Communities and Deference to Government. In Malawi, CRECCOM is a local NGO that grew out of a USAID education project. Today the MOE has only good things to say and holds it up as an example of what an NGO should be. One reason lies in how CRECCOM has defined its work. CRECCOM believes that what it offers is its methodology for working in communities. Although CRECCOM's methodology was developed around the issue of girls' education, it was later applied to quality of education issues. More recently, CRECCOM has used the same community social mobilization techniques to address issues of HIV/AIDS and worked directly for the Ministry of Forestry and Tourism to assist in resolving tensions around poaching at a national game park. Working to change attitudes in communities is the activity in which government officials generally believe NGOs should be involved. In addition to engaging in a government-approved type of NGO activity, CRECCOM has developed a deferential style for

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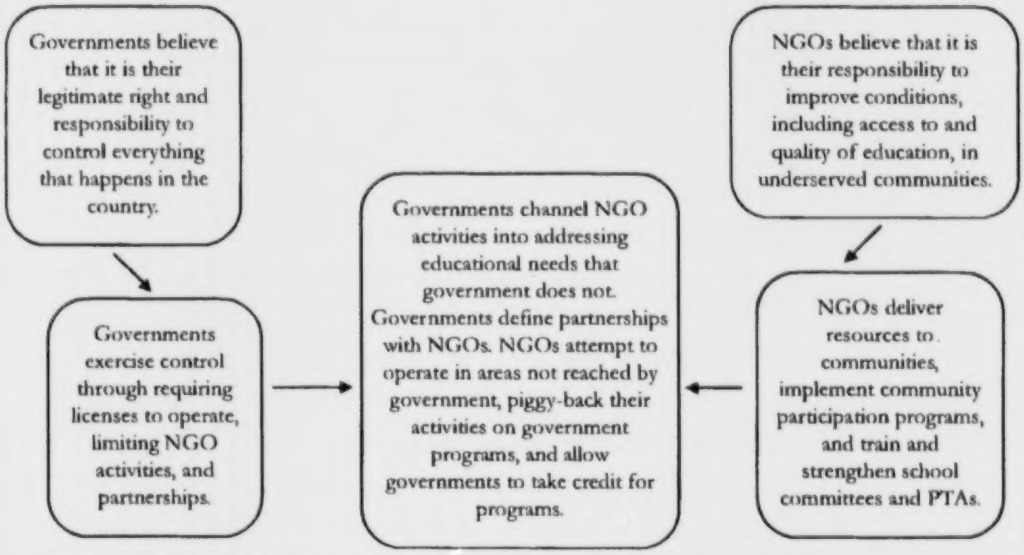
interacting with the government that heads off conflict and competition. Its director, who worked in the MOE for 28 years, listed some of the strategies CRECCOM has used to build this acceptance. He said "Never go to the government in the stance of knowing more than they do...Let them take your ideas...Bend your work to complement what the government is doing...Always invite the government to see what you are doing. Invite the government to monitor your programs...Keep allowances lower than those for government employees so as not to be seen as wasteful...Offer frequent briefing seminars, inviting the government and donors...Use a great deal of publicity."

Partnerships. The term "partnership" has become an increasingly popular term in NGO-government relations. It signifies an admission that, whatever NGOs and governments believe their responsibilities to be, they do need to work together. In Guinea, the term partnership is used regularly by Aide et Action and Plan International to signify a realization that their programs must provide technical and other resources to government to bolster its participation in their programs. Although the notion of partnership reflects a certain admission of mutual dependence, it does not signal an end to tension. "Partnership" in the discourse and actions of government officials often means (re)gaining control for the government and often a compromise in what NGOs wish to implement. Governments talk about better defining the role of NGOs in the sector, but assume that they will be the ones doing the defining. Partnerships can also provide a means for controlling NGO activities. In Malawi, one government official defined partnership as the government deciding what would be done, donors funding these activities, and NGOs implementing the plans. The more powerful the government, the more it can define its partnerships with NGOs. In Ethiopia, where the government is strong and the NGOs weak, a government official described partnerships with NGOs as "there is some shaping of the (NGO) program that goes on. But if the government needs work in a specific area or type of program and it is not where the NGO wants to work or what they want to do, then they resist." Within a context where government institutional capacity is weak and the NGOs are strong, as in Mali, NGOs see partnership to mean that government officials have accepted the prominent and legitimate role of NGOs in the sector. However, even in this case, Malian

The Dynamics of Government and NGO Beliefs about Legitimacy


Governments believe that it is their legitimate right and responsibility to control everything that happens in the country.
Governments exercise control through requiring licenses to operate, limiting NGO activities, and partnerships.
Governments channel NGO activities into addressing educational needs that government does not. Governments define partnerships with NGOs. NGOs attempt to operate in areas not reached by government, piggy-back their activities on government programs, and allow governments to take credit for programs.
NGOs deliver resources to communities, implement community participation programs, and train and strengthen school committees and PTAs.
NGOs believe that it is their responsibility to improve conditions, including access to and quality of education, in underserved communities.

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government officials insist that they alone should establish the terms of the partnership.

B. Capacity: Government Efficiency / NGO Effectiveness

This section explores the tensions between government perceptions of NGO capacity and NGO perceptions of government capacity.

1. NGO Perceptions of Government Efficiency

NGOs working in education in Africa tend to believe that governments are inefficient in providing access to quality education for all members of the society. Education statistics that demonstrate the failures of governments to adequately supply quality schooling in most African countries support this conclusion. Governments, however, say they are not inefficient, but, rather, that they simply do not have enough resources. They argue that they would be as efficient as NGOs if they had as much money to spend.

Because it is more difficult and expensive to reach marginal populations or communities on the periphery, government has most often failed to meet access and quality needs in these areas. To fill this gap in schooling, NGOs have frequently stepped in to supply education. Often there are no clear guidelines or policy regarding alternative approaches to basic education for children, as non-formal education is generally associated with adults. The MOE is usually not involved in NGO registration and often has no mechanism to learn about NGO activities. Thus, in most cases, the NGO starts its program and then tries to work out whatever issues emerge with the government. Usually more issues arise when NGOs attempt to supply education than when they work to support government schools through social mobilization or school committee training. And most of these issues revolve around government standards for school construction, teacher qualifications, and curricula.

2. How NGOs Supply Schooling

For many NGOs, creating community schools is a response to the inefficacy of government. Some type of NGO-supported community schools exist in all four countries, but the experience of the community schools created by Save the Children and World Education in Mali with USAID funding provides the most information. With exceptionally low enrollment rates (under 20 percent in 1990), large areas of the rural Malian countryside had absolutely no public schools, and one of the worst girls schooling ratios in the continent. Furthermore, secondary and university students had essentially hijacked the education system with periodic strikes and schools closures, making it virtually impossible for government to focus on the needs of basic education stakeholders. Almost all Malians interviewed claim that NGOs work in the education sector because the MOE was so ineffective. Nevertheless, until 1995, community schools in Mali were not registered as institutions of learning; this prevented their pupils from transferring to an equivalent grade in a government school and sitting for the primary school leaver exams. Since that time, almost all communities with NGO-supported schools have struggled with local and regional authorities to register their (community) school.

In Ethiopia, NGO-sponsored community school programs have sprung up in many parts of the country. Local NGOs have generally initiated these small programs with support from international NGOs. The government has watched these small projects but not attempted to regulate them because they have been defined as "non-formal," and, consequently, outside the realm of government responsibility. No uniform policy exists for students from non-formal community schools to continue their education in formal government schools. There is no consistent practice, either transfer or graduation, as to whether or not students who complete programs will be allowed into formal schools at the appropriate grade level. The decision often depends on who is making decisions at that time. An NGO facilitator in Ethiopia said, "The education officers (district and zone) thought that an alternative approach to the formal system was below standard and wasting children's time." Part of the obstacle to allowing students to transfer is the government's belief that NGO-supplied schooling does not meet national or regional standards.

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In Malawi, religious institutions have a long history of supplying education.[5] However, in 1994, with the election of the new government, these schools were integrated into the national system. Most schools in Malawi were originally built by religious organizations and are still frequently referred to as "owned" by a specific church. Recently, religious NGOs have become increasingly confrontational over teacher posting and the curriculum in the schools they support. The government curriculum does not include a religious education and the ministry believes all schools must use their curriculum. One Catholic church representative said, "We do not agree with certain policies such as the scraping off of Bible knowledge." The Muslim community has been angered by pictures of Islamic religious figures in the national curriculum, as human images are contrary to Islamic practice. Some religiously-affiliated schools have closed in an attempt to force the government to accept their choices of teachers and curricula.

3. Government Perceptions of NGO Skills

Some of the continuous pressure put on NGO-supported alternative schooling lies in government perceptions of NGO capacity. Governments have hired individuals with training and experience in education to design and manage the country's education system. The MOE runs teacher training colleges, writes curricula, selects and hires teachers, and sets standards for the entire system through its policies. The MOE perceives local NGO personnel as individuals with no training or experience in education. The government sees international NGOs as having more experience in education, especially when government staff has been hired by the NGOs. Plus, international NGOs frequently employ local NGOs to implement their programs without supplying what the government considers sufficient monitoring and supervision. Thus, local education offices must supervise the local NGO activities, a situation frequently described as a partnership by the government and a proof of sustainability by the donors, but also one that further saps the time and energy of the already over-extended district education staff. Governments believe that its responsibility is to maintain quality, standards, and uniformity and often feel that NGOs deliberately ignore government policy. All governments require continued legitimization through effective provision of services, yet they fear that NGOs could undermine government legitimacy if their provision of education services is seen as superior.

4. Government Standards

Government standards are a way for governments to control NGOs, but, in most cases, these standards existed prior to NGO involvement in the education sector. In Malawi, the standards for school construction have prevented both donors and NGOs from building less expensive schools for many years. Recently, teacher qualifications were increased, not to limit NGOs but to maintain minimum quality standards. This is not unique to Malawi. A Guinean official who visited the Save the Children community school program in Mali declared, "We will never allow such chicken coops to be established in our country."

Standards for Classroom Construction. The government of Malawi is proud that its standards for classroom construction have not been influenced by NGO programs. They say that they learned their lesson in 1967, when communities engaged in self-help school construction. Less than ten years later, they say, these schools had fallen down. Since 1985, the government has been committed to building schools that will serve for at least 25 years, a decision they say is supported by a cost-benefit analysis they conducted. The government also believes that if a school environment is not attractive, then neither pupils or teachers will want to remain, and pupil drop-out and a shortage of teachers in rural areas are two major problems in Malawi's education system.

Standards for Teacher Qualifications. Government personnel have a low opinion of most NGO teachers' qualifications and feel that the limited training provided is inadequate. They believe that the formal teacher training of public school teachers not only provides them with the required skills, but also insures a more mature teacher. In Mali, government school teachers and government officials complain about the quality of teachers in community schools, speaking with derision about the

[5] Primarily Catholic, Presbyterian, Muslim, and Seventh Day Adventist.

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purported "fact" that they are semi-literate. A Malian teacher, responding in a seminar where student achievement in public and community schools was compared, declared, "Are we going to accept that despite our training, our experience, and our membership to the professional teacher corps that these (community school teachers) are our equals?" Any discussion of how these less trained teachers could provide an equal level of service is dismissed with vehemence. Governments also believe that they, not communities, should recruit teachers and make decisions about teacher postings. In some countries, there has been conflict over churches' desire to select their own teachers, who may or may not meet government criteria. Government is generally able to enforce its teacher qualification standards because, for an education program to be sustainable, the government has to agree to take over the teachers' salaries.

Curriculum. Curriculum is a key policy issue in all four countries. However, the degree to which it is enforced varies. In most regions in Ethiopia, NGO-sponsored schools are not forced to follow the regional curriculum, partly because these schools are classified as non-formal, and not all regions have a standard curriculum for children in alternative schooling situations. This issue is also very new in Ethiopia and the regional governments have not decided what alternative schools should be doing. In Mali, the curriculum has traditionally been the key issue of contention between government and NGOs. The recent development of a new national curriculum, accepted by government, incorporates some of the community school curriculum. International NGOs in Mali have all decided that they would use the government's curriculum in their community schools, thus the tensions around curriculum have dissipated.

5. How Government Standards and NGO Attempts to Supply Education Interact

Save the Children has attempted to supply education in all four of the study countries; and each program is unique. Although it would be simplistic to reduce the variations in these programs to a single cause, one difference has been the various governments' position on education standards. In each country, Save redefined its program in a context shaped by government standards, its own previous experience, the country's changing history, the type of funding they had to work in education, and the specific expertise of the local Save staff.

Mali: Access. The first three Save the Children community schools in Mali in 1991, financed by sponsorships and a private donor, were designed according to the practice used in Save's integrated development programs, going to communities and listening to what they were told about the obstacles to education. Initially the government told them to set up their schools on the edges of the country, but three years later, 200 schools existed and the government was claiming ownership. The rapid expansion resulted from publicity of these community schools, pressure on the government to legalize non-government schools, and substantial donor grants to NGOs to support more community schools. The government also saw the community schools as a way to defray expenses and stretch public budgets, as the communities financed a substantial part of their own schools. All of these factors, plus the major need to expand access to schooling in Mali, contributed the fantastic expansion of community schools in Mali. There are now 786 Save community schools in Mali, reaching 47,502 students. Save feels it cannot support more schools and wants to stop expanding. Although improving access to schooling was the initial program goal, this has slowly evolved to include improvements in quality.

Malawi: Quality. Save the Children began its project in early 1994 with eight pilot schools modeled on the successful community school program in Mali. But in 1994 Malawi had its first election and the new government came into power on a platform committed to dropping all school fees. This meant that Save's proposal had been agreed to by one government, but had to be renegotiated with a new government during a period of extreme change in the education sector. The three major innovations of the Save model all conflicted with the new government policy: 1) the reduced Save curriculum, which involved teaching four subjects in the early standards, sharply abbreviated the eight subjects in

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the government curriculum; 2) the use of local community members as teachers, often with only primary school certificates, as "paraprofessionals" trained and supervised by Save, did not meet the MOE standard for teacher qualifications; and 3) village construction of school buildings did not meet the government standards for classroom construction.[6] A number of factors made the community schools in Malawi immediately different from those in Mali. In Mali, the first schools were established in communities where Save literacy centers had functioned for years. This meant that the community already trusted Save and a pool of local literate adults were available to teach. The background of the Malawian program director was in teacher training rather than community development. The major curriculum difference in Mali rested on the use of local language, while in Malawi the difference involved an "integrated" curriculum where the national curriculum was abridged. In addition, the government, after a long history of church-run schools, had no basic problem with the idea of NGO-supported schools—they just wanted the schools to all be of the same standard. The government threatened never to pay the teachers salaries unless the Save community schools conformed to government standards. If the teachers' salaries would never be taken over by the government, the program was not sustainable. And no donor would be interested in supporting such a program. The focus shifted from scaling up in the form of operating more schools, as in Mali, to establishing what elements of the Save program worked well and might be adopted into the national education system, a different form of scaling up. The major issues that emerged were those of quality, the experimental curriculum, and the methodologies in which the teachers are trained. Save now supports 455 schools in three districts, but the MOE has imposed its standards on both school construction[7] and teacher qualification in those schools. Under government scrutiny, the Save curriculum and teacher training practices are currently being examined and tested as a potential means of improving the quality of schooling nationally.

Guinea: Community Strength. Save the Children originally wanted to establish community schools in Guinea based on the model it used in Mali. The government, however, did not agree with this approach because it did not want classes to be taught by "untrained" teachers or for schools to not meet minimal construction standards. Save was, consequently, again obliged to compromise. Save currently has a relatively small pilot intervention, with approximately 20 schools, in one region of Guinea close to the border with Mali.[8] The government was comfortable with NGO support for parents' associations and school committees, but insisted that Save could not trespass on government domains such as teacher training and curriculum. Save, after a long period of negotiations with the government, adopted a model of support that strengthened parent associations, and provided some pedagogical support. While, as in Malawi, Save shifted from the access focus in Mali to one of quality, the means for having an impact on quality became community strengthening, rather than curriculum and teacher training. The long negotiations with the government regarding the approach enabled Save's staff to create open communication with ministry officials. The fact that Save did agree to modify their program in accordance with Ministry wishes is generally appreciated in official circles. Nevertheless, Save also had a certain number of preconditions for their program, such as a supply of adequate teachers, which have been accepted and honored by the Ministry.

Ethiopia: Experimentation. The Save program in Ethiopia is not funded by a major donor, which makes it different from those in Mali, Guinea, and Malawi in a number of ways. The program is supported by a grant from a small donor, which focuses on supporting innovative approaches in education. Grant funding allows Save to shape its program to fit the context, rather than responding to a design created by a large donor, based on what the donor thinks the NGO should be doing. Freedom from major donor funding also means that Save can focus on a process without worrying about time or short-term results. Save feels that it is in Ethiopia "for the long haul, there to stay with this program." The design of the Save program in Ethiopia contrasts with previous community school programs

[6] The greatest resistance from the government came over school construction.
[7] Save schools in Malawi cost approximately $26,000 as compared to about $7,000 in Ethiopia.
[8] The program has been administered from Bamako rather than Conakry.

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in other countries. In Mali, Malawi, and Guinea, Save supports local NGOs by hiring them to help implement their programs. The Save program in Ethiopia focuses on the local NGOs themselves, as potentially major actors in providing education and strengthening civil society. The strategy is to strengthen local NGOs who can then generate new ideas and approaches, and have a long and lasting impact whether or not the international NGOs or donors continue their in the sector. The ten local NGOs Save supports in Ethiopia were selected because they already had education activities. All are involved in supplying education for different disadvantaged populations in different ways as their names indicate: Adult and Nonformal Education Association, Kangaroo Child and Youth Development Society, Guraghe People's Self-help Development Organization, Voluntary Council for the Handicapped, Pastoralist Concern Association, and Kind Hearts' Children's Aid Development Organization. Save offers support and guidance in areas such as capacity building, networking, negotiating with government, and establishing links to other education programs. Save also assists in classroom construction, teacher training, and curriculum development. All local NGOs are encouraged to seek other funding as their programs mature. Because the local NGOs supported by Save are working in marginal areas where the government has been unable to supply education, and are classified as providing non-formal education, few conflicts over government standards have arisen. The local NGOs have used a range of different approaches to support curriculum, school committee composition, teacher qualifications, and building construction.

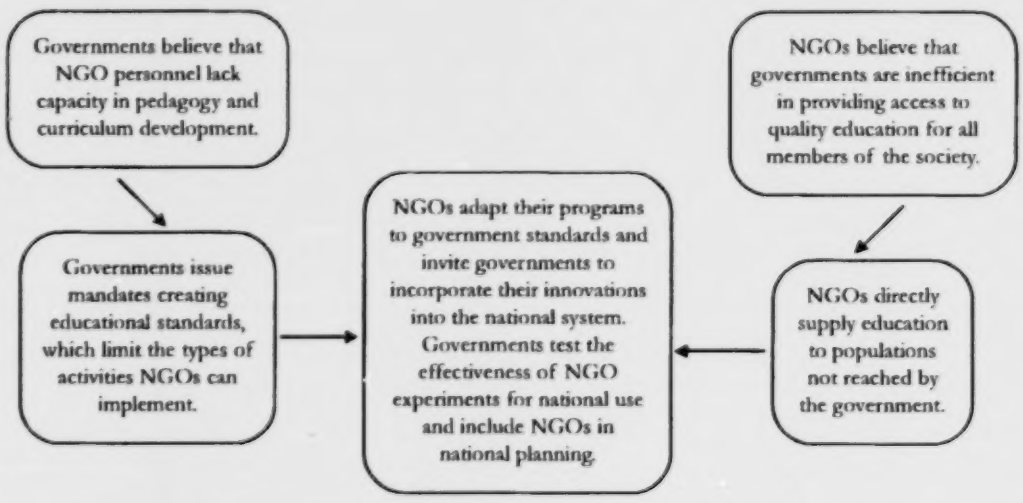
C. Motivation: Government Suspicion of NGO Character / NGO Frustration with Government Limitations

This section explores the tensions between government suspicion about what motivates NGOs and NGO frustration with government failure to explore new approaches. Each acts according to its perception of what the other is not doing, thus shaping their mutual interactions.

1. Government Perceptions of NGO Character

In all countries, governments question the motives of NGOs. The basic concern stems from the fact that NGOs are not government—they are private

The Dynamics of Government and NGO Beliefs about Capacity


Governments believe that NGO personnel lack capacity in pedagogy and curriculum development.
NGOs believe that governments are inefficient in providing access to quality education for all members of the society.
Governments issue mandates creating educational standards, which limit the types of activities NGOs can implement.
NGOs adapt their programs to government standards and invite governments to incorporate their innovations into the national system. Governments test the effectiveness of NGO experiments for national use and include NGOs in national planning.
NGOs directly supply education to populations not reached by the government.

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organizations and need to attract funding to survive. In Malawi, local NGOs are frequently perceived as "opportunistic," shifting their area of expertise to fit topics currently being funded. For example, government officials worry about the commitment of NGOs, which they say worked on teacher training in the 1960s, curriculum in the 1970s, girls' education in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and are now involved in HIV/AIDS programs. They see these shifts as driven by where funding is available, as NGOs seeking to benefit their own interests rather than the interests of Malawi. Government officials in Guinea speak with derision about how local NGOs are "fake" institutions that represent nothing more than the interests of a small cohort of ex-government officials who established them. In Guinea, this is partially an ideological holdover from the previous socialist regime, as government officials are suspicious of the notion of civil society and believe that these institutions are essentially "frauds" due to their profit making and entrepreneurship. Ethiopia, also emerging slowly from a socialist form of government, is suspicious of private enterprise, sometimes calling NGOs "crooks" due to the potential for profit because "private people own the NGOs." In addition to these suspicions, the government in Ethiopia perceives local NGOs as possibly involved in hidden political agendas, especially as some NGOs have been created by members of the former government who lost their jobs during the structural adjustment process. Their concern regarding international NGOs can also be political, a worry that international NGOs, funded by foreign governments, spread foreign ideas and values.

2. How Governments Monitor NGOs

In response to their suspicions about NGO character and motive, governments provide themselves with techniques for monitoring NGO activities and examining what NGOs are doing. Government involvement often goes far beyond requiring NGO reporting for accountability. In many cases, government intrudes into NGO management—making unexpected visits, demanding who can and cannot be hired, insisting on government presence in all NGO activities, taking over projects they think the NGO is unable to handle, etc. All governments require some form of reporting from NGOs, whether it is actually read or not. When donors fund NGOs, some governments feel that donors focus primarily on monitoring the results of the projects and do not pay adequate attention to financial monitoring. As a result, governments often require extensive financial reporting from NGOs.

Governments can intervene in NGO activities by requiring local government personnel to participate in all visits to the community and in the committees being established and trained by the NGO, and by placing NGO offices within local government facilities. In Ethiopia, the remaining socialist structure of the government extends beyond the school level into the community. This has meant that NGO facilitators cannot meet with community members unless the local government official agrees. Government representatives occupy many other school committee positions such as the local head of the women's affairs, youth, or peasant associations. The chairman of the local government office in the community, who has a legal status to collect resources for communities, is also the chairman of the school committee. This means that funds and materials contributed by the community for the school are not always given to the school. Currently, in Mali, the proper structure of school management committees is being debated. Government officials adamantly support the development of a standardized and mandated school management committee, one that will include representatives of the government education system. There is also a debate in Guinea over the role of school directors' vis-à-vis parent associations because, according to regional officials, the school director must be a member of the parent association.

In the extreme, governments can take over NGO activities that they find suspect or incompetent. In Ethiopia, NGO projects can be transferred by the government to regional development associations (often called "GONGOs"—government non-governmental organizations). These organizations were formed with the support of the government; they are primarily funded through ethnic membership contributions and government project funds. Development associations are the only NGOs in Ethiopia defined by a total region, which allows

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them to operate on a much larger scale than other NGOs. Two projects begun by NGOs that involved savings and loan programs, which the government declared to be an area where INGOs should not operate, were recently transferred to regional development associations. In another case, one regional government decided that an "outsider" from another region should not run a program and moved the project to the regional development association after finding funding from local businesses. In another region, the development association attempted to take over a NGO program on the grounds that it duplicated its activities.

The limited travel capacity of most central governments in Africa means district education offices usually witness the work of NGOs. In the countries where data were collected, NGOs tended to have better relationships with the local government offices near their projects than with central ministries of education. This does not mean that local government personnel are less suspicious. In all countries, there was a general belief that NGOs roles will be strengthened as decentralization becomes more established. This is a change that would increasingly link NGO activities to local rather than central education offices. Local education personnel generally have more responsibilities than they can handle; governments fear that supervising NGO programs and attending NGO workshops could further erode their ability to perform their jobs.[9]

3. NGO Frustration with Lack of Government Experimentation

Governments believe NGOs' role should be to deliver the plans created and monitored by the government. Governments do not see NGOs as a resource to experiment and test new approaches. Indeed, government officials are concerned with "duplication" of NGO programs. As one official in Malawi described it, "Lack of tight regulation and monitoring of NGOs has resulted in duplication between government and NGOs and between NGOs themselves." The notion of a range of experiments attempting to solve problems in different ways seems to be missing in government perceptions of NGO roles.

Although governments often say that they would experiment with innovative programs if they had the resources to do so, they generally do not. One obstacle is that governments almost always implement change on a national level. Where governments have attempted to pilot innovations, they have had to carefully locate the programs at sites in all geographic areas for political reasons. The NGO programs examined in this research usually began as small, local experiments in a specific geographic area. While governments complain that one problem with NGO programs is that they operate in a small area of the country, this limitation allows NGOs to experiment with innovative programs. Governments tend to be closed systems, more interested in their internal systems workings than the needs of communities. District education offices, for example, generally look upward to the MOE for direction rather than outward to the communities they serve. For instance, one regional education bureau official in Ethiopia commented that their good relationship with an NGO was due to the NGO having "done their homework" and proposing "approaches to the types of problems that the government did not have answers for."

4. NGO Experimentation

While more resources can always be used in education, often more valuable is insight into what the problems are and how to solve them. NGOs consider one of their most important roles to be experiments in identifying problems in education systems and the testing of a variety of solutions.

Funding. How innovative a program is depends on the type of funding an NGO receives. In Guinea, Plan International began by building and equipping schools throughout the N'Zérékouré region, financing approximately 100 percent of the cost of materials and construction. Over time, this program evolved and it now provides a fixed amount of funding to each local government area, with some parameters as to what it can be used for. The NGO then works with the local education and government

[9] Research has shown that in some countries a disproportionate amount of local MOE personnel time is spent in donor or NGO training workshops, an activity that supplies them with extra income through per diem but interferes with their ability to perform their jobs.

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authorities to determine priorities and monitor spending and results. The monies must only be used for education and health sector expenditures—both capital and recurrent costs can be covered. Plan International finances most of its interventions through sponsorships. As a consequence, the NGO does not have to report to donors and takes pride in its independence from donor "meddling." NGO independence, unfettered by financial dependency to donors and government, allows for a substantial amount of innovation, flexibility and assertiveness. Until recently, the region in which Plan International operates was home to the majority of refugees that have come from Sierra Leone and Liberia. The region has also been plagued with substantial rebel activity over the years, culminating in a bloody confrontation with the Guinean government at the beginning of 2001. Despite the fighting, Plan International continued to work in the region and has been very active in rehabilitation efforts after the conflict. As a consequence, government authorities and communities appreciate and praise the organization highly.

Scaling Up. Successful experiments all face the challenge of scaling up. NGOs can experiment because they begin with small pilot programs, but the goal is to change education for everyone. One way to do this involves seeking funding from major donors and expanding the program to encompass more or all of the country. One problem emerging from this approach is that donors generally fund models rather than processes, which can mean that the NGO becomes locked into its own model. Any model will generally work less well in other regions than in the context for which it was originally designed. And all models can be improved, tinkered with to work better. The funding to "scale up" is usually based on reproducing a specific model, which limits adaptation to new contexts and further experimentation. Another problem emerges when NGOs are supplying schooling rather than just supporting the national education system. Should NGOs be creating an entire education system, especially one which allows the government to provide less resources to the citizens most in need? And, even if this question is ignored out of necessity, is a dual education system being created—a formal, government-supported system in the urban and easy to access areas, and a NGO- and community-supported non-formal system on the periphery or in marginal communities? Save the Children and World Education and the government of Mali have been grappling with such questions for the last few years.

Rather than providing more of the same, scaling up can mean increasing the range and type of NGO activities. This can be evolutionary, as the international NGO ActionAid describes its education programs in many countries. First the NGO focused on building schools, but evaluations suggested that this had less impact than they had anticipated. Next they focused on pedagogy, developing a Freire-influenced approach to literacy and non-formal schooling. This led to creating approaches for breaking down the barriers between formal and non-formal schooling. Most recently, they began to focus on education policy at national levels. Local NGOs also can follow a process of expansion into new types of activities. CRECCOM in Malawi began its social mobilization campaigns in the area of girls' education, expanded to address issues of educational quality, and is now also working on HIV/AIDS issues and has assisted the Ministry of Forestry and Tourism. The danger in expanding the areas of involvement is that the government becomes suspicious of NGO motives because they see NGOs as opportunistically moving from sector to sector.

A third way that NGOs can expand from small-scale pilot experiments involves influencing the policies and practices of other organizations working in education. In Ethiopia, World Learning allowed government schools in the program area to send teachers to their training workshops although the schools were not part of the pilot program. The natural competitiveness among communities can allow ideas to spread from single schools with minimal encouragement. NGOs share ideas among themselves; the best example is probably the immense impact the BRAC program in Bangladesh has had on community schools all over Africa.

What NGOs have not done is communicate sufficiently what they have learned from their experiments. The results of evaluations are generally used to fine tune local programs, but often go no

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further. Most NGO publications are geared to soliciting funding rather than sharing exactly what they have done, what obstacles they encountered, and what the result was.

Probably the most powerful way for NGOs to influence education is for governments to adopt their innovations. Mali is a clear case in which the curriculum model developed by Save the Children for their community schools eventually led to a modification of the national curriculum. To do this successfully NGOs had to demonstrate their results. This may require both research and analysis, targeting both the process and the results, and working with the government to shape how the research is conducted. In Malawi, the government is now testing Save curriculum and teacher training approaches. And in Ethiopia, members of the MOE conducted their own examinations of six alternative schooling programs, wrote the case studies themselves, and presented the reports to their colleagues. This process converted these officials to the benefits of the NGO approaches they examined more firmly than any publication could have, and their investigations legitimized the findings in the eyes of the government.

5. How Government Intervention and NGO Experimentation Interact

This section provides concrete examples of the approaches government and NGOs have tried and the results of their efforts. Among the four countries in which data were collected, the government in Ethiopia exercises the tightest control over NGO activities and is the most suspicious of NGO motives. Under the previous government, no NGOs were allowed to function except to provide temporary emergency relief. Over the past few years, NGOs in Ethiopia have made great headway in assuaging government concerns, while the government has also taken steps to improve their relationship with NGOs. It is a story of baby steps, a slow process in which the government has worked to examine NGO experiments and NGOs have worked to demonstrate the value of their activities.

What NGOs Have Done. The decentralized, federated nature of Ethiopia's government may be polarizing increasing ethnic tensions, and means that local NGOs often can only work in the region of their ethnic background. But regional decision makers have been able to get involved in local programs. During the first few years of the World Learning project in Ethiopia, regional education bureau staff members showed up unannounced at schools where the program was operating to check things out. But the reports were always positive, and, gradually, the regional government, members of which were always included in the various workshops and training events, saw the program in a very positive light. Now the government worries that the program will end. Most NGOs in Ethiopia report a similar evolution in government thinking: suspicion, investigation, acceptance, and support.

Almost all NGOs working in education in Ethiopia offer workshops and presentations for government personnel to illustrate their activities and approaches. In fact, most NGOs must include local government staff members in any training conducted for their own facilitators or for community members. The Rift Valley Children and Women Development Association, a local NGO working in education, had trouble gaining the confidence of the local education bureau. They addressed the problem by holding workshops, providing a series of field visits for government personnel, and writing reports that described the impact of their activities. In addition, Rift Valley personnel visit the local education office frequently and try to explain in advance any issues that they feel might create misunderstandings.

A number of different international NGOs working in education have organized "exposure visits" for MOE and regional education bureau officials to investigate innovative approaches as far away as BRAC schools or as close as local NGOs working within their own region. Last year, ActionAid, inspired by the opportunities for NGOs to work within their own countries on national Education For All plans, sponsored a workshop in Ethiopia for NGOs working in education from all over the world. These types of workshops allow NGOs to share their innovations and encourage cross-fertilization of new experiments.

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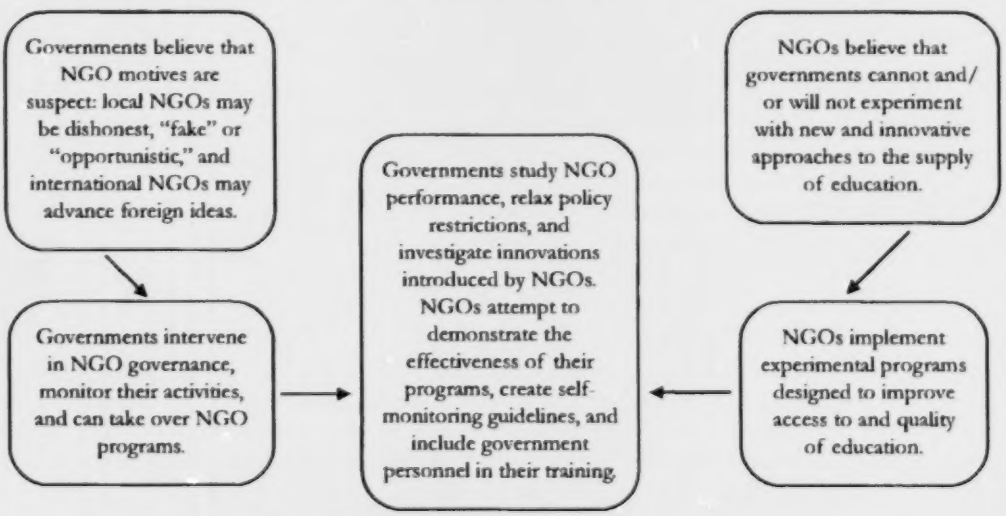
International NGO guidance for local NGOs often includes monitoring their activities. Because local NGOs are sometimes overly ambitious, international NGOs help local NGOs organize their activities into manageable tasks and expand at a reasonable rate. International NGO have also helped local NGOs to prepare and distribute reports about their activities in education. In Ethiopia, Pact, an international NGO dedicated to NGO capacity building, developed an Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool, which has been used with approximately 30 local NGOs to diagnose what type of capacity strengthening was needed. To combat negative perceptions about NGOs, Pact has worked together with other NGOs in the country to create a Code of Conduct, essentially a statement of operating principles. Its adoption in 1999 by the NGO sector appears to have sent a positive signal about the ethical underpinnings of NGOs, provided evidence of NGO ability to impose self-regulation, and increased collaboration among NGOs. Pact has also worked to improve media portrayal of the NGO sector; in recent years it has transformed from no or negative coverage to frequent, positive portrayals of NGO activities.

What the Government Has Done. The registration process for NGOs in Ethiopia, a major problem mentioned by all NGOs working there, is said to have become easier and the number of NGOs registered with the government has grown significantly. Now over 300 NGOs are registered in Ethiopia; more than half of these NGOs are Ethiopian and about 30 are working in education. At least one region is attempting to redesign the registration guidelines. Based on the fact that NGOs now register on a national level, but are monitored at the regional level, they are arguing that all registration should occur at the regional level.

Gradually the Ethiopian government has recognized the existence of NGO programs in education and the government has begun to include these activities in their planning. Several regional offices have begun planning school construction in terms of where alternative NGO-sponsored schools are being created or are planned. One regional teachers' training college has implemented a two-year, non-formal education diploma course to meet the need for teachers in non-formal programs. Another regional education bureau has produced a directive instructing all primary schools to facilitate the transfer of students from NGO schools into the formal education system.

Redd Barna has begun an alternative education program in a region where the regional education

The Dynamics of Government and NGO Beliefs about Motivation


Governments believe that NGO motives are suspect: local NGOs may be dishonest, "fake" or "opportunistic," and international NGOs may advance foreign ideas.
NGOs believe that governments cannot and/or will not experiment with new and innovative approaches to the supply of education.
Governments intervene in NGO governance, monitor their activities, and can take over NGO programs.
Governments study NGO performance, relax policy restrictions, and investigate innovations introduced by NGOs. NGOs attempt to demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs, create self-monitoring guidelines, and include government personnel in their training.
NGOs implement experimental programs designed to improve access to and quality of education.

bureau director had, with support from Pact, traveled to Bangladesh to study the BRAC program. He came back committed to alternative approaches and has worked with Redd Barna to negotiate a new curriculum for alternative schools which will both meet the national curriculum standards and guarantee that graduates of programs using this curriculum will be admitted to government schools. This curriculum is currently being discussed on a national level and may soon be adopted as a national standard.

A condition built into the Sector Investment Program in Ethiopia required the MOE to investigate the possibilities of alternative education. Last year, members of the planning office carried out this research and produced six case studies of alternative education programs, five of them run by NGOs. In part because they conducted the research themselves, they became supporters of alternative approaches to education. The MOE evaluation of the community schools made the NGO approaches credible to the government because, as one government official pointed out, "no one believes what NGOs say." When this research was presented, MOE officials commented enthusiastically about the need to embrace alternative approaches to education.

It has now been written in the five-year plan that the government will encourage more NGO involvement in education.

D. Conclusions

The underlying differences between government and NGO beliefs generate actions, which define their interactions. However, a pattern underlies all three sets of government NGO tensions described in this chapter: government and NGOs must collaborate and cooperate to achieve productive outcomes in the education sector.

Governments and NGOs do not always agree on an NGO's legitimate role so NGO activities are limited to areas in which government does not work. NGOs often limit their role purposely to avoid tangling with the government. In other situations governments and NGOs hold negative perceptions of the other's capacity in supplying education. This often leads to a carefully defined and limited division of labor among NGOs and governments. These two models illustrate the need for governments and NGOs to collaborate better to achieve results that are complimentary.

The interactions between government and NGOs that have emerged from suspicion and frustration about one another's motivation seem to be the most effective means for building a collaborative and interactive relationship. The focus on increased learning about one another in the example from Ethiopia suggests that increased exposure can increase cooperation. This is also supported by the evidence that local education personnel had better relationships with NGOs than central governments in all four countries. If this is the case, then time may be a key factor in forming more collaborative relationships; among the countries included in this study, the longest significant NGO involvement in education has been in Mali, which is where government-NGO relationships most resemble a true partnership working on integrated activities.

Chapter III. Education Policy and NGOs

NGOs working in the education sector have an impact on education policy by their very presence and interventions. In countries with little or no previous experience with non-governmental involvement in the education sector, the proliferation of NGO-supported education activities represents a *de facto* policy change—a new actor is taking on educational responsibilities that were once of the purview of the state.

At times, governments institute new policy in reaction to NGO education programs, making (or limiting) available resources to support NGO actions and facilitating (or constraining) NGO efforts. This chapter, however, focuses on the ***intentional*** role that NGOs play with regards to ***education*** policy.[10] In the four countries studied, NGOs have engaged in a concerted and explicit effort to change education policy. What policies have they attempted to change? Why have they decided to do this? Have they been successful? What has contributed to their success or failure? These are some of the questions addressed by this chapter.

Before continuing, a few words concerning the definition of ***policy*** are in order. In the simplest terms, policy is a set of mandatory directives that regulate decisions. Policy can be "set" at any level of an education system by those in a position of authority. There might be school-level policy that determines how much parents should pay in fees or national-level policy that defines what should be in the curriculum. In practice, however, policy is a more complex affair. Policy can almost always be interpreted and is not necessarily enforced or enforceable. The practice of "influencing" policy, therefore, can also be seen in simple or complex terms. NGOs might want to influence an existing policy (change registration requirements for community schools) or ensure a policy is enforced (oblige local officials to register community schools according to regulations) or help interpret a policy (that "community members" does not include the school director). We are adopting a partial view of policy, examining attempts by NGOs to influence the content of policy and how it is enforced, although not how it is interpreted at local levels. We also have narrowed the scope of policy under review to that which affects decisions made above the school level. We recognize that NGOs often try to change the school-level policy dynamics through community participation, and that most interpretation of policy does happen in the school and classroom. Nonetheless, this analysis focuses on how NGOs influence decision-making apparatuses above the community level and thus have an influence beyond specific communities where they might work.

In practically all cases, international NGOs have been at the forefront of trying to influence national education policy or the national education policy process. In Guinea, local and national NGOs have been completely absent from the policy arena. In Mali, national NGOs have played an important role in the Groupe Pivot,[11] but Save the Children and World Education were the driving force of the campaign in that country to change policies regarding community schools. In Ethiopia, ActionAid and Pact supported local NGOs in efforts to change local curriculum policy. In Malawi, national NGOs are part of a coalition of national and international NGOs and the Alliance which includes NGOs, donors and government, although ActionAid and Oxfam have clearly taken the lead in creating both associations.

[10] We emphasize education policy because some NGOs affect all types of government policies, some with implications for the education sector. Admittedly, the line is sometimes fuzzy, such as when NGOs pursue different sector objectives simultaneously—certainly the case for programs that aim for greater community participation, with education as one arena. Nevertheless, this analysis focuses on NGO programs that are primarily focused on the education sector and efforts to influence policy that are motivated through those programs.

[11] A grouping of national and international NGOs working in the education sector in Mali—see Section C for a more complete discussion.

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National and local NGOs have not taken the lead in efforts to change national education policies or the policy process for two reasons. First, most national NGOs tend to work from a "service delivery" perspective. Few that work in the education sector adopt a comprehensive and political agenda to change policy or the relationship between national government and citizens. Second, and more importantly, international NGOs are much more powerful, with financial and political resources that dwarf anything that local and national NGOs can mobilize. Whereas local and national NGOs are stymied when education policy gets in the way of their programs, international NGOs can use contacts and networks within and outside of the country where they are working to implement a strategy to affect policy.

In the cases of Ethiopia, Malawi, and Mali, local and national NGOs are nevertheless involved in efforts to change the policy process. Although they have essentially been enlisted in the efforts initiated by international NGOs, they are active participants in all attempts to change policy and/or the policy process in these three countries. Is it a problem that international NGOs have taken the lead on education policy change? Many government authorities claim that it is, as it appears that "outside forces" are trying to shape priorities in the education sector. Many international NGOs themselves are concerned with being accused of substituting or shaping the agenda. Representatives from ActionAid and Oxfam have expressed disappointment that national actors, particularly at the local level, have not played a significant enough role in setting priorities. On the other hand, without these outside forces certain policy changes would probably not occur at all.

A. Why Do NGOs Attempt to Affect Education Policy?

International and national NGOs are engaged in changing policy as a consequence of two basic motivations. On the one hand, they are involved in policy out of necessity. However, they find that they need government to make their education programs successful, and thus work to transform government priorities and actions in the sector.

On the other, some NGOs see changing the policy process as part of their mandate. They hold an implicit assumption, often made explicit in discussions, that government action lacks legitimacy, or is unaccountable to the public.

1. Changing Specific Policies

Education policies supported by NGOs can be categorized in many ways. Some policies are set at a national level with highly significant implications for the overall education system, e.g., adopting a new curriculum, or changing the status of a certain type of school. Others are more modest, affecting

Country	NGO	Policy Agenda
Guinea	Plan International Save the Children	More flexible teacher recruitment and deployment
	Plan International	Promote girls' education
Mali	Save the Children World Education National NGOs	Integrate community schools into the formal education system National language pedagogy More flexible teacher recruitment
Ethiopia	ActionAid Pact Save the Children	Students from non-formal center can enter into formal schools in one region. Another region has created and had accepted a non-formal curriculum. Now trying to influence policy on national level.
	World Learning	Change local funding policy that reduced local budgets as a consequence of NGO interventions in region
Malawi	Save the Children	Promote changes in curriculum and teacher training practice

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educational practice in a particular region or locality, e.g., giving a specific community school a local license to operate, or allowing a local NGO to function in a particular jurisdiction. Furthermore, some policies change educational practice, such as curriculum change, whereas others aim to affect management, e.g., teacher deployment and recruitment. In all four cases, examples of each type of policy can be found. The table below lists some of the key policies that have been supported (although not necessarily successfully changed) by NGOs in each country.

As seen above, the policies supported by NGOs can run the gamut. However, the following three examples typify the range. The Malian case is an example of how a group of international and national NGOs pursued an education policy agenda to make the status of community schools official. In Guinea, one international NGO sought a change in teacher deployment policy as a precondition to program implementation, and another international NGO facilitated a change in local policy affecting teacher recruitment. In Ethiopia, international NGOs collaborated with the government to accept a non-formal curriculum.

Mali. As mentioned in previous chapters, in Mali, community schools are practically synonymous with NGOs in the education sector. From their inception, however, the role and place of community schools in the education sector has been contentious. Every aspect of community schools has been the subject of intense policy debate in Mali, from the curriculum to the qualification of teachers to the status of their pupils. Fundamentally, government policy at the outset indicated that community schools were non-formal education institutions, conveying no right or opportunity for pupils to continue their education in public schools. As community schools proliferated, NGOs that supported them had a clear interest in having government accept these children into formal primary schools or secondary schools. However, government officials expressed the position that these schools did not provide the same quality and content of education as government-sponsored primary education.

More will be said below as to how NGOs engaged in their campaign to change Malian education policies concerning community schools. Here, we note the specific policies that NGOs targeted to create a bridge between community and public schools. First and foremost, government officials claimed that community schools were not ***legally recognized*** as educational institutions and thus had no status within the formal educational system. The Malian government could not recognize the educational experience of children within these establishments. To change the status of community schools required a presidential decree. The president issued a decree allowing children who were enrolled in community schools to attend public schools and sit the primary school leavers' exam. It also allowed public education authorities to supervise instructional quality in these establishments and opened the door for public resources, e.g., teacher training and supplies, to be made available to these schools.

Second, government and community schools conflicted over curriculum policy. One of the government's principal criticisms of community schools has been that they use a streamlined curriculum and Bambara as the language of instruction for the first three grades. Government authorities argued that, as a consequence, children are not being prepared to transfer to equivalent grades levels or to take the leavers' exam for which French is the official language used. This argument was used by government officials as one of the principal reasons why community schools should not be considered on par with public primary schools. Save the Children and the Centre National d'Education engaged in a process of collaboration to modify the curriculum used in community schools.

Concurrent to this process, as a medium of instruction, the Ministry of Education adopted *pédagogie convergente* (using maternal languages in the early grades) as part of the official curriculum. Although not the only force contributing to curriculum change, many officials interviewed through this study claim that Save's work with the Ministry of Education contributed to softening official disagreement.

Guinea (Save the Children). One very serious education issue in Guinea at this time is the shortage of teachers. This situation provides the backdrop for the next two examples. In Guinea, almost every rural school in the country does not have enough teachers. In the most extreme cases, recently built schools have not opened because they have no teachers. As part of government efforts to address this shortage, "contract" teachers have been hired subsequent to training and deployed throughout the country. Nonetheless, the government to date has not been able to attract enough people to become contract teachers and many quit after one or two years of service. In addition, many refuse or "find ways" to avoid deployment to isolated rural schools.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Save the Children was obliged to change the design of its program in Guinea considerably. Whereas it had originally planned to use the main characteristics of its Mali program, the Guinean government had refused this approach, principally because of construction standards, but also because they were not comfortable with Save's plan to hire and train its own teachers. Save agreed that it would apply government construction standards, use the government's curriculum, and hire government teachers. In this sense, Save did not succeed in changing educational policy in Guinea, as they did in Mali. However, as a precondition to starting its program, the government agreed to provide all necessary teachers to schools Save built and supported. The government provided this guarantee and has fulfilled its obligation as well. This constitutes a policy change because the government has not made a similar commitment to any other education stakeholder in Guinea—community, education official, or donor.

Guinea (Plan International). As discussed in Chapter Two, Plan International has an extensive education support program in the N'Zérékouré region of Guinea where local government authorities receive conditioned annual grants for either primary education or primary health services. Because of the teacher shortage, many local governments use their grant to hire "community teachers." Plan International supports these teachers through training and other pedagogical services. Plan was also instrumental in raising community school teachers' salaries over government contract teachers. Although the Ministry of Education was not informed of the decision to use community teachers, local education officials agreed and even participated in recruiting them. In summary, local authorities instituted a policy change to hire additional teachers and to pay them a premium; and this change was made as a consequence of Plan's involvement in the education sector.

One interesting commonality of these three examples is that in no case did NGOs start their programs with the objective of changing government policy. Decisions or actions to affect policy came later, after it was decided that the success or survival of their programs required the modification of government policy. Even the "condition" set by Save the Children to ensure teacher availability was more an implementation issue than part of program design. In fact, in Guinea, Save the Children decided not to challenge policy constraints put in place by the government and instead modified its project design. It appears that when NGOs confront barriers during implementation, they readily seek ways to address these constraints, including affecting policy change. However, the NGOs covered in this study did not come to a country with the intention of changing specific education policies, although, as discussed in the subsequent section, NGOs have explicitly attempted to change the policy process.

Instigating policy change to ensure program success can take many forms. In Mali, the future of community school programs required fundamental changes in national education policy, which took time and significant resources and energy. In Guinea, Save adopted a very narrow "policy agenda" to address specific implementation concerns. The implications for the education system as a whole will probably be minor, although an interesting precedent is set with regards to teacher deployment policy. Plan's example is a case of *de facto* policy change. Through the provision of resources, Plan International facilitated a local policy change that contradicts national policy.

2. Changing the Policy Process

Although few NGOs seem to design their program with the objective of promoting certain education

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policies, many have specifically been interested in changing the ***education policy process***. Typically, these NGOs share an interest in changing the way in which the public participates in decision-making in the education system. The table below summarizes the NGO programs that share this objective in the four countries studied. Typically, because these NGOs have concluded that the public does not have a sufficient say at any level of the education system, from the school to the ministry, their programs have aimed to change this state of affairs.

Generally, these NGOs hope to change the policy process by institutionalizing a variety of mechanisms that ensure that the public is treated as ***clients*** of education services. As a consequence, policy would hopefully be set with the involvement of the public, implemented with public oversight and its impact assessed in the public arena. The most typical mechanism is a grassroots organizational structure that democratically represents community members vis-à-vis the school or local education authority and is in a position to demand local accountability. Another mechanism is the creation of national bodies that group together different civil society groups and interests and can interact directly with national authorities on policy formation, implementation, and assessment.

Two examples—World Education in Guinea and Mali and ActionAid, Oxfam, and CARE in Malawi—typify contrasting approaches to attempting to change the policy process. For World Education, the key to greater participation is transforming parents' associations into more representative and organized civil society organizations that can demand greater accountability from school directors and teachers at the school level and other education officials at higher levels of the education system. In both countries, World Education's program has focused on this transformation, promoting the election of new parents' association leaders, aiding in establishing bylaws, and providing training for all members. In a subsequent phase, World Education aims to establish more representative parents' association federations as a way of engaging in the policy process at higher levels of the system.

The ActionAid, Oxfam, and CARE approach to changing the policy process started from the other end. Their analysis of the education policy led them to conclude that much education reform is not successful because it is set by consultants hired by donors and the top officials in education and finance ministries without engaging the public. In Malawi, they helped to create a coalition of national and international NGOs and other civil society organizations, e.g., teacher unions and church groups, whose purpose is to advocate for better quality and access. The Coalition has taken on a confrontational strategy to gain a seat at the policy table. They have published critical articles in newspapers and distributed tracts espousing that the Ministry of Education is not doing its job to ensure that teachers are paid well and receive appropriate training. Ministry officials have expressed their irritation with their tactics and although the Coalition has begun to have some access to different policy forums (i.e.,

Country	NGO	Policy Process Agenda
Guinea	Aide et Action	Act as liaison between community groups and education authorities
	World Education	Organize parents' associations at local levels through new bylaws
Mali	World Education	Transform parents' associations or school committees to represent communities
	Groupe Pivot	Create a lobby group representing the interests of NGOs in the country
Ethiopia	World Learning Pact	Redefine school committee membership and roles in one region
Malawi	ActionAid Oxfam CARE	Mobilize education stakeholders at national level to pressure government for policy change

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they made a presentation to the parliament), they have not yet succeeded in changing the policy agenda.

ActionAid has decided to leave the Coalition and join another group of NGOs (called the Alliance) that includes government and donor representatives. They did this for two reasons. First, they were uncomfortable with the more confrontational tactics. Second, and ironically, they believed that international NGOs were over-represented within the Coalition and were driving both agenda and strategy. This is interesting because the Coalition's objective was to create a non-governmental Malawian force that could contest and argue policy positions.

Compared to the pursuit of specific policy objectives, changing the policy process has proven to be more difficult. World Education's aim for parents' association federations to have an impact on policy decisions above the school level has proceeded much more slowly than expected. As for Malawi, it is too early to tell. It appears that the Coalition has become a more accepted partner at policy forums, but the competition between it and the Alliance appears to weaken the influence of both.

This last point exemplifies a common sticking point for many efforts to change the policy process. The question posed by all is: to what extent do these processes truly engage the public in policy deliberations? Are the different mechanisms put in place really communicating the preferences of community members, and civil society to decision makers? Or are these positions really those of the NGOs that are sponsoring efforts to create this process?

3. From Policy to Policy Process—A Necessary but Difficult Step

In analytical terms, NGO engagement in the area of education policy has followed a particular progression. NGOs engage in activities to improve access. To render their actions sustainable or to even be able to implement what was planned, they necessarily must try to encourage government to change policy. As they engage in a strategy to change policy, they realize that the policy process is as much the problem as the policies in question. Although this progression does not describe the evolution of a specific NGO program in any one country, it broadly describes how NGO thinking in the sector has evolved. In fact, World Education, ActionAid, and Aide et Action have all come to this conclusion on an institution-wide basis, and their new and ongoing programs reflect this evolution in perspective.

Although NGOs have tallied many successes in changing government policy and even creating mechanisms to ensure that their impact on policy is more prominent, finding the formula to change the national policy process has proven to be difficult. Regardless of this difficulty, however, NGOs in the education sector believe it is necessary.

B. NGOs and Education Policy: The Perspective of Different Stakeholders

Whatever motivates NGOs to play a policy role, other actors have their own ideas as to whether NGOs should or should not be education policy advocates and which policies (or type of policy process) NGOs should support. In the four countries studied, stakeholders ranged from avid supporters of NGOs' policy role to adamant foes to benign ignorance that NGOs play any role at all. Depending on the stakeholder group in question, these stances have created both constraints and opportunities for NGOs as they engage in policy change.

1. The Government Perspective

Government officials are the most important actors when it comes to changing policy. After all, the desired change is in behavior of government institutions, which means a change in both attitude and actions of the education authorities who inhabit them. Also, for policy change to truly be effective, government officials at all relevant levels of the education system must enforce and enact new decisions—from the ministry to the school. If NGOs want to change government policy, the "target group" of all interventions will be government.

This is problematic because, as discussed in Chapter Two, governments are already ambivalent about the domain NGOs occupy in the education sector. As NGOs move into policy, this wariness becomes particularly acute. Few government officials interviewed in any study country were particularly enthusiastic about the growing role of NGOs in the education policy process, most displayed varying levels of displeasure. In every country, government officials spoke adamantly about policy areas they considered to be off limits to NGOs and often expressed particular frustration with NGO incursions into these territories. This annoyance with NGOs that work to change policy tends to be tempered in countries with longer histories of NGO involvement in the sector. However, it is a given that NGOs certainly do not have a willing ally amongst government officials in their endeavor to change policy.

In Mali, government officials have gone farthest in accepting the idea that NGOs can and should play a role in policy—it is now an accepted part of the education system. With ten years of NGO activity in the education sector, and substantial involvement in policy, national government officials may grumble about NGO involvement in policy, but no official interviewed in Mali claimed that they should play no role. In the other three countries, government officials expressed varying levels of animosity towards NGO involvement in policy deliberations or any attempt on their part to influence policy. Indeed, in Ethiopia, Guinea, and Malawi, NGOs have not had anywhere near as much impact on policy as has been the case in Mali. In all three countries, government officials essentially depicted NGOs as implementers of government policy. In Ethiopia and Guinea, government officials tended to express the greatest resistance to NGO involvement in policy or the policy process. However, in each of these three countries, government has allowed NGOs to participate to some degree in education policy deliberations.

- In Guinea, some international NGOs have recently been allowed to participate in regular donor coordination meetings where significant policy deliberations often occur. In addition, Aide et Action has indicated, and most government officials have accepted, that they want to act as liaison between government and the communities where they work, particularly around policy issues. However, the mechanics of this liaison have not yet been developed.

- In Malawi, the Coalition and the Alliance have started to be included in regular meetings with the Ministry of Education. In addition, the Coalition has advocated before Parliament, where they urged that budget priority be given to teacher education, teaching and learning materials, and teacher salaries and condition of service.

- In Ethiopia, the Ministry of Education is now rethinking its policies around non-formal schooling. Pact, ActionAid, and Save the Children sit with the MOE on selected task forces to join in these discussions.

Chapter Two discussed how government sometimes created institutional mechanisms that can facilitate discussions with NGOs and help coordinate interventions. These mechanisms have also served as important conduits for NGO involvement in policy deliberations. In Mali, NGO involvement in policy discussions has been institutionalized through the PRODEC[12] process, where national and international NGO representatives are included in a number of different committees that monitor the implementation of reform. In other countries, nothing so formal exists, although as mentioned above, NGOs are included in task forces or are invited to attend meetings.

At local levels, NGOs have had significant impact on policy decisions in Mali, Guinea and Ethiopia. In Mali and Guinea, this impact reflects more the weakness of local authorities to curtail policy ventures by NGOs than a decision to welcome them into the policy process. In both countries, government officials have expressed frustration that they have no way to ***prevent*** NGOs from having an impact on policy, particularly at a local level. Whatever they may think about the role of NGOs in the sector, they claim that they are overwhelmed by

[12] PRODEC is a 10 year education sector plan. It consists of over 15 committees that oversee different aspects of the reform—finance, curriculum reform, teacher training, etc.

the implementation of NGO programs in their jurisdiction. For example, in Mali, local education officials regularly complain that their preferences are overruled by the actions of NGOs, such as the placement of a school or the recruitment or teachers. The "policy" they have set at a local level has been ignored by the NGO that proceeded without proper authorization. In Guinea, many school construction projects financed by the World Bank came as a complete surprise to local education officials. Thus, in these cases, NGOs are, in essence, enforcing their own policies.

In Ethiopia, NGO involvement in policy is much more controlled, even at local levels. However, NGOs have had the most impact on policy at local levels. In contrast with Mali and Guinea, this result has not happened *despite* government officials but rather with their full participation and consent. Indeed, the degree of true local control of education resources and decisions determines whether local officials feel engaged or frustrated by NGO efforts to change policy.

Although government officials interviewed for this study were generally aware of NGO attempts to change specific policies, they were usually less knowledgeable of efforts to change the policy process. For example, whereas government officials universally notice and claim to appreciate NGOs' social mobilization of communities to assist schools or increase enrollment, they had little to say about mobilizing communities to demand more accountability from the government above the school level. As discussed in Chapter Five, they tend to continue to view such efforts as a way to transform civil society to embrace government policy than to affect it.

There was one interesting exception to this position. In Guinea, NGOs encourage parents' associations to participate in year-end evaluations of school results. At all levels of the system, education officials were very uncomfortable with this trend and many expressed outright opposition. Many government officials claim that pedagogy in Guinea is a "reserved domain" and thus citizens have neither the mandate nor the qualifications to discuss the effectiveness of teacher practice.

On a final note, most government officials do not see a difference between the policy agenda of donors and that of international NGOs financed by those donors. And, as mentioned in the previous section, significant differences are rare. However, many government authorities stated that NGOs are in fact *advocating* in favor of donor-preferred policy agendas. The more suspicious view NGOs as actually nothing more than veiled agents of donors. Others maintain a more neutral perspective. Thus, NGOs are seen in most cases as an extension of donor programs, rather than as independent actors—if their funding comes from donors. In Ethiopia, most NGOs have their own funding, so government does not see a relationship between the donors and NGO agendas.

Any effort to affect policy needs tension with government. Challenges to the "legitimacy" of NGOs to affect policy heighten this tension. However, NGOs have had openings and possibilities to influence policy even in environments where government officials have claimed categorically that NGOs have no role in policy deliberations. It appears that three elements contribute to such openings. The first is time. As NGOs become more integrated into the education sector, it becomes more difficult to exclude them from policy deliberations. Second, familiarity inspires greater trust. When officials and NGOs work together on different educational problems, they form linkages of trust and communication that soften ideological or other opposition. Third, and in contrast, policy impact can depend on the relative strength of NGOs to leverage change. Because of the essential nature of the service that is being provided (such as with Plan International in Guinea) or the weakness of local government to prevent NGOs from making decisions without their consent (as with local officials in Mali), policy change becomes the prerogative of NGOs. This last element, of course, has moral and sustainability ramifications.

2. The Donor Perspective

As will be further discussed in Chapter Four, donors finance NGO education activities because they share similar education priorities and goals. Not surprisingly NGOs that receive support from donors share their policy agenda and advocate for similar

policies. In both Ethiopia and Mali, USAID and international NGOs financed by USAID have worked together to support policy change that protects and encourages community schools. In Guinea, USAID worked closely with Save the Children to change government policy regarding teacher deployment. In general, the study found few examples of NGOs and donors working at cross-purposes in terms of education policy.

Usually, when donors and NGOs did not share the same policy objectives, these NGOs had independent sources of funding. By paying community school teachers more than the government provides contract teachers, Plan International pursued a teacher policy different than that supported by the World Bank, and by extension, other donors in Guinea.[13] The NGO Coalition in Malawi has pursued an education policy agenda to elevate teacher pay and conditions, which are not high priorities amongst donors. More importantly, the Coalition has also targeted government policy towards donors, claiming that the answer to many education issues would be through debt relief and the reversal of certain structural adjustment measures.

Donor representatives interviewed for this study had little to say about these independent NGOs or their interventions to affect policy. In Malawi, donors representatives were somewhat irritated by the Coalition, but more for its tactics than its agenda. In Guinea, donors were not concerned about the policy changes Plan Guinea had accomplished in the N'zérékouré region.

Donors have less tolerance for NGOs that pursue a separate policy agenda with their funding. Negotiations between World Education and USAID in Mali in 1995 provide an interesting case in this regard. World Education's program essentially has civil society objectives. It aims to increase community and civil society involvement in education decision-making throughout the education system. Thus World Education targeted parents' associations of both public and community schools. However, during negotiations, USAID insisted that World Education focus solely on community schools and abandon support to parents' associations of public schools. Although World Education continued to support those public school parents' associations that had been in their program prior to 1995, no new public sector parents' associations received funding under the new program. Essentially, USAID's education policy agenda at the time indicated that community schools were the privileged vehicle for system expansion and that resources for public schools should be limited. In fact, USAID in Mali in the mid-1990s tended to champion community schools as the principal solution to low enrollment and quality in Mali.

Thus, donors and NGOs funded by them tend to share the same policy agenda. When they diverge, donors are easily able to leverage a realignment. This support, however, reflects the general point made above that NGOs attempt to influence policy when the success of their program depends on policy change. Donors, of course, address policy constraints that block programs they finance. What is less clear, however, is whether donors give much importance to the "right" of NGOs to play a policy role.

Chapter Four distinguishes between NGOs that receive support from education sector departments within donor agencies and others who receive support from the "democracy and governance" sector. This demarcation is also relevant here. World Education in Mali and Pact in Ethiopia, for example, have received part of their funding through the democracy and governance programs. This funding has specifically supported the objective to engage non-governmental actors in the education policy process. In these cases, developing federations or networks that can represent local education stakeholders reflects donor policy priorities.

Education donors, however, have exhibited less interest in NGO efforts to change the policy process than in changing specific policies. Although donors obviously support these through financing, donor representatives interviewed in our study focused on specific education policy agendas rather than the actual role that NGOs play in the process. USAID and other donors have encouraged government to

[13] To date, donors have urged government to control salaries for contract teachers, keeping them at a level much lower than civil service teachers. Donors are changing their position on this policy and contract teacher salaries will probably rise in the near future.

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allow NGOs (particularly international NGOs) to participate in policy discussions in Mali, Guinea, and Ethiopia. However, in these cases, the overall objective, according to those interviewed, was to work towards the relevant policy change, rather than a change in the policy process. From the perspective of most education sector donors, community mobilization and the creation of stronger parents' associations are believed to contribute to higher quality, more equitable, and greater access to education. If government policy prevents this from happening, then donors will engage (with NGOs) in an effort to change those policies. Fundamentally, for donors, it is the policy ends that are of interest when it comes to NGOs, not the policy means.

3. The Local Stakeholder Perspective

Few local actors had much to say about the policy role of NGOs, except in Ethiopia. Generally, they feel national policy decisions are a very distant concern. In fact, most interviewees, particularly community representatives, did not understand the question. Local government and local education authorities usually brushed aside the issue having little to say about national policy. In many cases, the authority indicated that he or she knew as little about NGO involvement in national policy as of the mechanics of national policy formation itself.

In all countries, local actors were very much aware that NGOs could influence local decisions. In fact, many community representatives viewed local NGOs as their conduit to decision makers, capable of advocating for resources and advantages. The case of Ethiopia is different because of the unusual way that education policy is set and enforced in that country. Much policy is substantially more local than in the other three countries. Curriculum, teacher recruitment and qualifications, the placement of schools, and other domains that are typically reserved by higher levels of the education system are decided by local government. In this case, local actors were very much aware of how the policy process worked and the influence that NGOs could have. Thus the more local the decisions, the more likely local stakeholders understand the impact of NGOs on policy.

4. Teacher Unions

Teacher union representatives were interviewed in Guinea, Malawi, and Mali concerning their perspective on NGOs and their role in the policy process. This stakeholder is usually neglected by donors and international NGOs, and is often construed as a constraint to policy change and educational improvement.

Of all actors interviewed in Mali and Guinea, union representatives exhibited the most animosity towards NGOs and their attempts to influence education policy. For these stakeholders, NGOs were clearly a destructive force that is undoing the public education system. NGOs (both national and international) were usually equated with donors and constituted a complementary force of structural adjustment programs. They were considered to have no legitimacy working in the education system and by extension in the education policy arena.

International or national NGOs working in the education sector in Mali and Guinea do not have any relations with teachers' unions. They appear in some of the same forums and meetings but rarely engage in discussion or common actions. Union representatives were usually not informed of the specific programs or policy endeavors of either international or national NGOs, thus the animosity was often fueled by misstatements of what NGOs were actually doing. Lack of relations has certainly made these unions an enemy.

The impact of unions on NGO policy endeavors appears to be slight in Mali and Guinea. These unions have not specifically mobilized to curtail NGO action, although they have tried to stop the recruitment of community school teachers in both countries, with little success. However, their opposition looms as a potential constraint to any policy initiative supported by NGOs.

In Malawi, ActionAid, Oxfam, and CARE have taken a diametrically opposed tack with unions. The Coalition has specifically asked the Malawian teachers union to join its endeavor. Also, the initial policy agenda set by the Coalition is essentially the same as that of the national union—better conditions and

pay for teachers. It is too early to tell what will be the impact of this alliance—it may have contributed to the adoption of more oppositional strategies by the Coalition. Nevertheless, it will be very interesting to see what this relation between traditionally isolated education stakeholders will yield in terms of policy change.

5. The Stakeholder Environment for Policy Change

The principal issue that must be addressed to affect policy is the position of other stakeholders. Each of the four actors reviewed above hold a particular perspective on the role of NGOs in policy deliberations. However, each stakeholder's position has variable importance to NGOs' successful efforts to affect policy.

Interestingly, donors that fund NGO projects have the greatest impact on whether an NGO can successfully pursue their policy agenda. If donors and NGOs are aligned in a strategy to change a particular policy, they constitute a formidable alliance. Although government will challenge the "independence" of NGOs, this has not constituted a major constraint to NGO efforts to affect policy.

In most cases, government officials represent the "object" of endeavors to change policy. Although there are cases where weak government makes it possible to affect policy without engaging government officials, policy change usually requires some sort of sustained interaction. Resistance and even animosity are a given as NGOs attempt to change the behavior of government, but these have rarely constituted insurmountable constraints.

Local stakeholders have been irrelevant to efforts to impact policy, and in most cases unaware of policy change strategies implemented on their behalf, particularly at national levels. This is very problematic as they are supposed to be the beneficiaries of policy change. How important would it be if local stakeholders did not actually want a policy change that NGOs had effectively influenced? They rarely have the ability to reverse policies (although they can often ignore directives). Although this might be an unlikely occurrence, the potential that this might occur illustrates the weak link in the paradigm that drives NGO interest in changing both policy and the policy process.

Finally, stakeholders that have been neglected constitute a potential threat for NGO strategies to change policy. Unions, political parties, churches, interest groups, other branches or sectors of government are both potential allies and formidable foes to the policy agenda supported by NGOs. Watching how the Malawian Coalition unfolds as a veritable force to change policy should provide some important lessons in the opportunities and difficulties of including these often ignored stakeholders in policy work.

C. How Do NGOs Attempt to Influence Policy

This section reviews the different strategies and tools that NGOs have used to affect policy in the four countries studied. In all, seven different strategies have been used in different combinations to affect policy agendas: policy dialogue, coalition building, leveraging policy through donors, leveraging through resources, demonstration, "partnership," and advocacy.

1. Policy Dialogue

Policy dialogue refers to a process by which advocates of a particular policy engage in ongoing discussions with decision makers to reach a consensus. Ideally, these are informed by the best data and analysis possible and provide an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to participate in the deliberations or at least have their perspective considered. Policy dialogue is typically a means for stakeholders and representatives to engage education authorities to either advocate for a certain policy change or ensure that their point of view is considered during policy deliberations. Frequent face-to-face meetings with decision makers, of a formal or informal nature, constitute the essence of this approach. What is important is that stakeholders create an atmosphere of partnership to solve a problem or come to consensus. Often, policy dialogue entails trust-building actions, such as

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stakeholders working together on the same task force that is responsible for fleshing out a particular policy.

Mali and Guinea both provide examples using policy dialogue at a national level. In Mali, NGOs engaged government authorities on a continuous basis in a wide range of policy issues and continue to do so. They have had regular meetings, both informal and formal, with government officials to defend and promote community schools. They have prepared and introduced information and arguments to officials to persuade them to change the rules on recognizing community schools.

Aide et Action in Guinea is preparing the ground for more extensive use of the policy dialogue approach. They are actively seeking to take part in different government policy discussions. For example, they attend the regular meeting of donors held every month. They also have established contacts and relationships with national education authorities that they hope will enable them to advocate for their policy priorities more effectively.

In Guinea, it is too soon to judge the effectiveness of Aide et Action's endeavor—the NGO has not yet developed a specific policy agenda for which to advocate. As mentioned above, they are particularly interested in establishing the elements of a different policy process. In the case of Mali, policy dialogue has been very successful. Many interviewees have indicated that the numerous encounters with government officials eventually convinced the officials to change the rules with regards to community schools.

Policy dialogue is clearly the method of choice at more local levels as well. In almost all countries, international and national NGOs have attempted to develop better ties with education officials to avoid constraints to program implementation. As discussed in Chapter Two, earlier phases of program implementation led to conflict and blockages because local education authorities had not been involved in decision-making processes.

2. Coalition Building

In several countries, coalition building has been used as a way to leverage change and also engage in policy dialogue. Here again Mali provides a prime example. The creation of the Groupe Pivot, an NGO consortium, was extremely important to push forward the community school agenda, a strength that certainly came from numbers. The Groupe Pivot was initially established with support from the federation of NGOs in Mali as part of a more general effort to organize the NGO field. At first, the Groupe Pivot was essentially a "talk shop" where representatives from interested local and international NGOs would discuss a particular chosen theme. The Groupe Pivot obtained financing from Save the Children and USAID for operations and then took on the advocacy role for community schools. Mostly, the Groupe Pivot engaged in policy dialogue with national officials to influence changes in policy. It was also able to share information and coordinate efforts between NGOs to present a common front for government. Another consequence was that many member NGOs also increased their institutional capacity.

However, the Groupe Pivot experience also demonstrates the difficulties of coalitions. After having won the fight for community schools, the Groupe Pivot's effectiveness as an organization began to decline. Leadership changed and also became more dispersed as key members received invitations to participate in one international conference after another. Essentially, coalition maintenance requires substantial attention and resources. The coalition made a fatal mistake; upon donor urging, it began to act as a clearinghouse for donors who wanted to contract NGOs for their programs. Although relatively effective as an advocacy group and "talk shop," it was not prepared to manage contracts. Eventually, because of accusations of mishandling of funds, the credibility of the Groupe Pivot was undermined. It continues to exist but with very little importance for the education NGO landscape.

The attempt of several international NGOs to create a coalition of NGOs in Malawi has been quite different. From the beginning, the coalition adopted

a more adversarial posture towards government and donors than the Groupe Pivot. Although the consortium in Malawi has not had the devastating managerial issues faced by the Groupe Pivot, the fact that it has split into two consortia indicates that efforts to institutionalize a national civil society front vis-à-vis the education system has also been difficult.

The two experiments are different in a number of ways. First, the Groupe Pivot was formed by the federation of NGOs in Mali. Although donors and international NGOs had rendered it operational, it was essentially established by a number of key national NGO actors. ActionAid, Oxfam, and CARE were the driving force in establishing the Malawian Coalition. In fact, as mentioned above, ActionAid has expressed its concern that the consortium did not represent the interests of national civil society stakeholders in education, which is one of the reasons that it has left. Also, the concrete nature of Groupe Pivot's policy agenda certainly helped focus discussions and decisions in a way that the Malawian consortium has not yet been able to achieve. However, after the Groupe Pivot had essentially achieved its desired policy changes, its raison d'être became more ambiguous and negatively affected its credibility.

3. Using Donors to Leverage Policy

Because many NGO programs are financed by bilateral and international donors, they are often pulled into policy discussions between government and NGOs to resolve implementation problems of varying scale. Donors evidently want their programs to succeed and, as mentioned above, often have a common policy agenda with NGOs as a consequence. Here, two examples provide contrasting experiences of donors leveraging for NGO policy objectives.

In Mali, USAID and the World Bank have always championed community schools. Eventually, the lion's share of their assistance was funneled towards community schools, with little left for the public school system. Working in tandem with the Groupe Pivot these donors placed pressure on government to create a more advantageous environment for community schools.

National policy in Ethiopia requires that the amount of money brought into a region for a project by a NGO be withheld from the block grant type funding sent to the regional office. The purpose of the policy is to prevent uneven amounts of resources being given to different regions of the country. Although not always implemented and variably interpreted in different regions, this policy has created much grief for NGOs in the education sector. For example, a World Learning project was held up for a year by a regional bureau of education that would not give permission for it to begin. Finally education staff from USAID called a meeting that included different government representatives. The meeting was described as "a show of power." USAID also created an "incentive fund" to repay the regional education bureau the money it would lose when the World Learning project began. Following these events, the project was approved. Since that time, however, the government has rarely implemented the policy, and the incentive fund has not been used very often. Thus, donor and NGO worked together to prevent the enforcement and shape the interpretation of a particular government policy.

NGOs take risks, however, when they depend on donors to help push their policy agenda. On one hand, it reinforces the perspective of government and others that the NGOs are an extension of donors, rather than independent actors pursuing their own objectives. On the other, donors can be fickle and may abandon an NGO if their interests shift.

4. Leveraging Change through Resources

As discussed in Chapter Two, governments are ambivalent toward NGOs because NGOs are contributing resources to the education sector that would probably not be gained in any other way. After all, money does buy influence. In countries such as Mali and Guinea where NGOs control a very large proportion of external funds targeting the education system, policy leverage happens because their programs are so big. In all four countries, NGO-supported sponsorship and integrated rural

development programs have brought money into local education for many years.

The Plan International program in Guinea and the Save the Children program in Mali are both relevant examples. In Guinea, the Plan International program supports schools in every district of the N'zérékouré region and provides budgetary support to almost every local government. As a consequence, Plan's involvement in the policy process is growing, even at a national level:

> *At first, some donors were firmly against having international NGOs attend their monthly donor's meeting. However, when it was pointed out to them that Plan International was contributing annually much more to the education sector than a number of regular members around the table, they were obliged to change their mind* (NGO representative).

Unlike Plan's activities in Guinea, many education officials in Mali have opposed Save the Children's program from the outset. However, the proliferation of community schools proceeded so quickly that education officials were obliged to accommodate and control them rather than prevent them from growing. Save's program has grown from a handful of schools in the early 1990s to over 700 schools in 2001. In addition, four other major international donors and NGOs (World Education, UNICEF, Africare, and CARE) all support community schools. Community schools enroll approximately 25 percent of the children in Mali. This obviously provides the basis for substantial policy leverage.

5. Providing an Example

In many cases, evidence of the effectiveness of NGO programs has influenced policy. Usually, however, demonstration has been used in conjunction with other approaches to leverage decision-making. As NGOs conduct policy dialogue or mobilize advocates (donors or other partners) to pressure government, being able to point to irrefutable program success (particularly in comparison to government efforts) is a strong argument.

In Ethiopia, education authorities at both national and local levels were rarely aware of non-formal education experiences supported by NGOs. Non-formal education is not considered a domain of the government, and to change the government's negative perceptions of NGOs, international NGOs began to highlight non-formal education activities to bridge this. Pact organized and funded many trips for government education personnel to visit NGO education projects, both within Ethiopia and outside (trips to BRAC, for example). Also Pact organized information exchanges, such as sponsoring a national "NGO day" where NGOs described their work: the activities and their impacts. NGO success stories have also been written up and distributed. One objective of this demonstration has been to encourage government to develop policies on alternative education systems. Government is now writing NGO involvement into its new five-year plan.

To inform the current debate about use of local language as national policy, Save the Children and the Malawi Institute of Education conducted research. They have also undertaken longitudinal research into curriculum and teacher training effectiveness. Save used a reduced curriculum, which is now being tested in government schools in contrast to the official government curriculum. Save the Children schools' teachers are trained to interact differently with pupils and given more support. This training is being tested in government schools.

In Mali, the government and Save the Children conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of community schools. This evaluation demonstrated that the children attending community schools achieved the same levels of competency as those in public schools. Though many different actors within the education establishment protested these results, it nevertheless convinced many officials that community schools must be included in the formal education system.

Demonstration, however, can also increase the defensiveness of government actors to the detriment of the "cause." Again, in Mali, community school evaluation results, when presented to a large group of teachers in the Koulikoro region, were met with

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uproar and anger. The teachers reactions were so strong the meeting ended prematurely. Fundamentally, the problem was presentation; the message communicated was that the community school teachers were responsible for the success in these schools and, by extension, public school teachers were responsible for the respective failure of public schools. As discussed in Chapter Two, government insecurity regarding its own legitimacy drives efforts to control NGOs and accuse them of lesser quality interventions.

6. Partnership

As mentioned in Chapter Two, partnership has become a reigning theme in NGO discussions. Although not very clearly defined, partnership connotes NGOs and government officials working together towards a common goal with complementary responsibilities. Technically, partnership is a result rather than a strategy, however, NGOs have actively sought partnership as a strategy to change policy. The following three examples provide an interesting contrast as to how such partnerships are developed and their impact.

In Mali, government officials protested the curriculum Save used in community schools which led Save to contract with the Centre National de l'Education to develop a modified educational program. The process of collaboration between these two actors helped realign perspectives and lessened the education officials' opposition to the community school approach. In this case, the NGO sought a technical relationship with government officials to resolve a policy difference. By doing so, an ideological difference was eventually resolved as a technical issue.

In Guinea, Plan International's program is, by its very nature, a partnership between government and NGO. Plan makes grants to local government to implement its education agenda. This relationship between government and NGO is probably the most integrated of any NGO program studied. The overall aim of the program is to enable local authorities to prioritize and meet education and health needs.

In Malawi, the Alliance grew out of the Coalition because some actors were uncomfortable with its confrontational strategy for change. A defining characteristic of the Alliance is that it includes government and donor representatives. Although Guinea, Mali, and Ethiopia have institutional mechanisms of varying degrees of formality and permanence in place that bring together government, donors, and NGOs, the Malawian Alliance is the first such case that is initiated and piloted by NGOs.

Each partnership was formed to address a very different policy concern. In Mali, the partnership was needed to transform a political problem into a technical issue that could be resolved. In Guinea, partnership represented a way to underwrite the decentralization of educational decisions. In Malawi, partnership was used to operationalize a particular strategy for changing the education policy process.

However, a key commonality of these three types of partnership is that they are all financed by NGOs. Thus, partnership has invariably meant a transfer of resources from NGOs to government. This, of course, represents a certain irony considering the ideological roots of most NGO programs—to provide an alternative to government for meeting educational needs.

7. Advocacy Campaign

When most people think about affecting policy change, the common vision is one of a grouping of individuals and organizations that intend to work towards a change in government policy through advocacy campaigns. These can take various forms from media and sensitization campaigns to political action. The key characteristic is a concerted effort on government officials to change policies through public pressure. Although advocacy probably constitutes the most common strategy to leverage policy in more developed countries, it has been rarely used as a way to change policy in these four cases. This is not really surprising because policy has not usually changed in these four countries as a product of public pressure, but rather because of other factors.

The Coalition in Malawi provides an interesting exception. International and national NGOs linked with other non-governmental stakeholders are using the newspapers and other forums to challenge government positions on a number of education issues. Although quite familiar in many more developed countries, it represents an untried tack in Malawi, and government officials have initially reacted negatively and defensively. However, it is too early to make any conclusion regarding the effectiveness of this strategy.

Basically, the NGOs underwriting the Coalition want Malawi to become the kind of country where advocacy can work—that is, one where policy is modified because the public mobilizes to leverage change. The departure of ActionAid indicates a possible weakness in this strategy—possibly because the Coalition did not truly represent or engage the grassroots of Malawian society. The members and the audience of the Coalition remained a thin elite of education stakeholders.

8. Selecting Effective Strategies Depends on Imagination

No recipe exists for what strategy to use where to achieve which policy objective. Our sample is too small and diverse to develop such firm guidelines. Also, the nature of policy change—contingent on many interlocking factors—makes textbook solutions impractical. Nevertheless, the array of strategies NGOs have used does indicate how to develop effective approaches to affect policy.

First, policy goals need to be well defined. In each case of successful policy change, the targeted policy was clear and well understood by all actors. However, discrete policy goals do have one problem—what to do when they have been attained?

Second, there is both power and problems with numbers of partners. Working with donors, other NGOs, or other stakeholders has its advantages, and has made it easier to leverage change with government. However, maintaining relationships with other actors requires skill and capacity, particularly if members of any particular coalition are in competition or have unequal relations.

Third, no strategy was undertaken without resources. Each strategy had significant financial costs associated with it. Successful education policy change cannot be accomplished inexpensively.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, not one NGO that engaged in successful policy change copied a procedure or strategies used by another NGO. This is even the case with the same international NGO working in several countries. This does not mean that a particular NGO had not learned lessons from the experience of others or its previous adventures in policy change. In fact, observation shaped many of the strategies developed by NGOs. Ultimately, however, effective strategies for policy change were developed as a product of honest analysis of past successes, comprehensive problem solving, and creative thinking.

D. Conclusions

NGOs must attempt to influence policy because what they hope to accomplish will otherwise be stymied. This is the first and perhaps most important lesson to be learned from the experience of NGOs in this area. Changing government policy and the way that it is formulated is probably the most effective way to ensure the success and sustainability of NGO interventions. NGO projects need to include a policy component as part of their overall implementation strategy.

The second principal lesson from NGO experience in these four countries is that policy change requires substantial effort to nurture and maintain relationships with different education stakeholders. Although confrontation may have its place, most successful endeavors to promote a particular policy agenda have depended on efforts to align the NGO and other actors—other NGOs, donors, and, most importantly, government officials.

Third, NGO interventions to change policy have also revealed a significant weakness in NGO programs—they have yet to find a successful formula for changing the policy process to ensure that the public understands, participates in, and can influence education policy at different levels. Although NGOs have created links with all actors,

including grassroots stakeholders, they have so far failed to develop mechanisms that link these actors together in an effective manner. The following chapter will examine more fully some of the reasons why this has been difficult for NGOs. What we want to emphasize here is the importance of continuing to attempt to change the policy process, regardless of the difficulties encountered to date.

Essentially, NGOs as a group learned that without a fundamental change in the relations between those who provide and benefit from education services, many of the innovations and improvements that have resulted from NGO involvement will not be sustainable. This is the next challenge for NGOs who work in the education sector and for those who support them.

Chapter IV. NGOs and Donors: Who's On First?

The initial motivation for this study came from the observation that USAID and other donors increasingly have involved NGOs in their educational program. This chapter examines the motivation for and the nature of this relationship, as well as how it has evolved over time.

The first section explores the different mechanisms in place that tie NGOs to donors and discusses some of the implications for these different types of relationships. The next two sections examine the motivations of donors and NGOs to enter into this relationship, investigating the reasons why donors have turned to NGOs and the value-added they expect by working with them and then the same issues from the perspective of NGOs.

Not all NGO programs are financed through funds provided by bilateral or multilateral development agencies. A number of international and national NGOs working in the education sector have established and maintained their programs using resources generated in other ways—charity contributions, sponsorships, and even national government. Section D compares these NGO programs with those that receive donor support to provide insights as to how donor involvement in NGO activities impacts on their scope, priorities, and results.

In each of these sections, the relationship between donors and international versus national NGOs is compared and contrasted. As discussed in Chapter One, the experience of the two types of NGOs is quite distinct in the education sector and their relationship with donors is similarly so.

A. Different Kinds of Relationships

The relationship between donors and NGOs has been defined through one of three basic mechanisms. First, donors have issued a request for proposals from NGOs to implement either a specific activity or a program in the country in question. Terms of reference with varying degrees of scope and precision are issued and NGOs compete for an opportunity to implement these projects. Usually, the competition is restricted to NGOs (that is, no profit-making firms are allowed to submit a proposal).

Among international NGOs, the World Learning program in Ethiopia is an example of this kind of arrangement. In this case, USAID issued a request for applications for a cooperative agreement with an international NGO to implement a specified program of support to community organizations and schools. For local NGOs, the World Bank construction program in Guinea and the UNICEF program for community schools in Mali represent typical cases where national requests for proposals can only be taken up by national and local NGOs.

The second type of arrangement is a contract or agreement resulting directly from negotiations between a donor and an NGO. NGOs do not compete for a pre-determined program in this case. Either, a donor approaches an NGO to invite it to prepare an education program that meets their programmatical goals in a particular country, or an NGO might submit an unsolicited proposal to a donor requesting support for funding, arguing that its approach to education fulfills donor objectives. Often, the NGO already has an established presence in the country and chooses an appropriate donor to develop an education program. Also, an NGO that already has an education program in a particular country might approach a donor to solicit support for expanding or continuing the program. This has been the case for both the World Education and the Save the Children programs in Mali, as well as the Aide et Action program in Guinea. Finally, and more rarely, NGOs might approach a donor (or vice versa) to establish a presence and a program in a particular country. This was the case for both World Education and Save the Children in Guinea. In the four countries studied, only international NGOs have

established a relationship with a donor in this manner.

The final type of arrangement defines much of the financing of ***national*** NGOs by donors in the four countries. In this case, donors contract with international or well-established national NGOs to finance the activities of smaller national NGOs. Most USAID-financed programs in all four countries include a similar arrangement. In Ethiopia, both World Learning and Pact use local NGOs to implement aspects of their programs. This is also a signature approach of all of World Education's programs. In Guinea, the World Bank first had contracted with individual NGOs to construct schools. In the new program, the government has contracted ten international and large national NGOs to mediate the work with local NGOs.

As an overall field, contractual relations between donors and international NGOs have become more formal. Historically, education initiatives were at first developed by NGOs using their own resources. Then, many approached donors requesting resources either to generalize or continue their program (for example Aide et Action in Guinea, Save the Children and World Education in Mali, Save the Children in Malawi). This also occurred internationally, as programs in one country served as a model for another (for example, Save the Children in Mali and Guinea). NGOs' successes in education sector activities led donors to ask NGOs to develop similar programs. This was the case in Mali, in particular, as donors were all interested in the idea of community schools. NGOs, seeing this opportunity, began proposing education programs to donors. In the last instance, donors have increasingly used competition as a basis for establishing NGO education programs.

The trajectory of World Education programs in support of parents' associations typifies this evolution. First, World Education developed its program in Mali working with parents' associations in Bamako with World Bank support. World Education then submitted an unsolicited proposal to the USAID mission to expand the program which was renegotiated twice. World Education then approached USAID missions in other countries with other unsolicited proposals, offering to replicate the Mali model. This year, the USAID mission in Guinea has decided to compete the education program.

This increased formalization of relations has certain implications for the shape of NGO education programs. First, donors have a clearer understanding of the role they believe NGOs should play in their education programs. By competing programs with well-delineated results and approaches, donors know exactly what to expect from the program. However, one unintended consequence of "clarity" is that NGOs become less innovative and experimental, which, as we will see below, is a common justification for their use.

The growing use of intermediaries to work with local NGOs also has positive and negative implications. Donors usually do not have the administrative capacity to contract and supervise many small NGOs and thus the economy of scale significantly eases the management burden. This means that the intermediary filters all relations with local NGOs.

B. Using NGOs to Implement Donor Programs: The Need for Results

Why have donors turned to NGOs to implement education programs? We put this question to all the interviewees and the answers were surprisingly consistent across countries and stakeholders. First, and overwhelmingly, the interviewees told us that donors turn to NGOs because they are capable of doing things in the education sector that government cannot. This was expressed both in terms of the governments' limited capacity and NGOs' particular characteristics. Answers invariably contrast NGOs to government. Second, donor representatives indicated that often it is easier to work with NGOs than with government or contractors to obtain the same result, more a matter of contractual ease than approach. Third, some donor representatives and other interviewees told us they appreciate the NGOs' ability to innovate and experiment. Finally, some donor representatives claimed that using NGOs fulfills a mandate. The use of national NGOs in particular is construed as way to reinforce civil society.

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1. Doing What Governments Are Not Able to Do

According to most interviewees, donors use NGOs to implement their programs mostly because they have achieved more measurable results more efficiently than government. Interviewees of all categories agree that NGOs are generally able to accomplish the same results less expensively than government, because they achieve lower unit costs and experience less wastage. Also, NGOs tend to meet deadlines more reliably than governments when both are contracted to implement the same program.

Local NGOs contracted by the World Bank in Guinea to implement construction projects exemplify this point. Local NGOs have built twice the number of schools with the same budget, and met almost all construction deadlines—particularly important when schools must open in time for the school year. Most Guinean government officials agree that NGOs are more timely and accountable than the government service traditionally responsible for school construction. In Mali, community school programs of various international and local NGOs have led to a historic increase in enrollment that has eluded donors and government for several decades.

Chapter Two discussed some of the reasons why stakeholders believe that NGOs can deliver results in a more cost-effective manner than government. Everything from the purported weakening of state capacity through structural adjustment to purported corruption has been used to explain why NGOs deliver what government cannot. Some even challenge the accepted belief that NGOs are better. However, the evidence is strong that NGOs can deliver in ways that government has not proven able to do. Essentially, donors turn to NGOs out of necessity: if targets are to be met and results produced, donors must choose the most effective avenue.

Donors, however, have not abandoned governments or the possibility that government services can be improved. Donors continue to target the capacity of government to provide educational services and to use government channels to deliver everything from teacher training to textbooks to construction. No donor implements its program solely through NGOs. In addition, donors recognize certain limitations to NGO implementation of programs. Whereas NGOs are often the preferred venue for construction, distribution of goods and services at community levels and "social mobilization," donors continue to work mostly with governments on issues of pedagogical reform (curriculum change, textbook development) and teacher training.

NGOs are chosen over governments because they have a number of inherent characteristics that enable them to act in ways government cannot. Practically everyone interviewed greatly appreciated NGOs' capacity to work at a local level to mobilize communities to support schools. Most governments no longer work directly with communities in the education sector. The increased interest in community participation to improve education in the late 1990s has led donors to NGOs to implement their community programs. In Ethiopia, both World Learning and the Tigray Development Association implement community-focused programs the current government education offices would not support. In Malawi, a number of international and local NGOs are funded by donors to work in communities.

Few donors, however, have thought through the long-term implications of having NGOs rather than government services implement certain aspects of their programs. Although most governments have come to accept that NGOs have a certain comparative advantage in chosen domains, no donor representative interviewed for this study clearly indicated what the "future place" of NGOs should be. Until recently, this concern has been muted by ideological suspicions concerning the state's role in providing any public good (see below). Although donor representatives have expressed some concern about issues of sustainability and have often insisted on exit strategies, most have been framed in terms of how *communities* might take over the programs rather than government. In countries where decentralization is occuring, this tack might have some promise. However, even in these cases, community and local government capacity to step in at the same level of cost-effectiveness and deliver the same level of results cannot be assumed.

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Essentially, by framing the role of NGOs as an agent that can do what government is not ***capable*** or ***expected*** to do, donors have perhaps limited the potential involvement of NGOs in the education sector and have even closed off certain avenues for sustainability. After all, if NGOs cannot do what governments are supposed to do (at least not forever), then who can?

2. Make Life Easier for Donors

Aside from the obvious benefit of having a trustworthy implementer, donors benefit in other ways by working through NGOs. First, it is easier to negotiate with NGOs than with governments. Although NGOs have their own agendas and priorities, terms such as "sovereignty" and "leveraging policy" never come up as arrangements are made between NGOs and donors. Whereas it took several years for donors to agree with the Malian government on where to build a new school, this was not an issue for NGOs. On one hand, donors have exceptional leverage over NGOs who receive their assistance. Although governments are often desperately dependent on donor funds, Ministries of Education will not shut down if negotiations over a project end. On the other, the political "messiness" of negotiating with government is absent. After all, NGOs have fewer stakeholders to consider when engaging in discussions with a donor. NGOs can ignore teacher unions, political parties, bureaucratic hierarchies, dueling elites, the public, the IMF, and relations with neighboring countries. Where government is weak, they can even ignore education sector authorities. NGOs are indeed vulnerable to political pressure from government officials and other national and local stakeholders, however, significantly less so than government officials.

Second, a number of donors indicated that working with NGOs has certain advantages over working through contractors. Some of these advantages are ironically the result of government regulations that, in many countries, restrict the actions of entrepreneurs. The World Bank project in Guinea illustrates this clearly. Many fewer bureaucratic and legal constraints existed to engage a NGO to build a school than to hire an entrepreneur.

Another advantage to international NGOs over international contractors results from the fact that many have established a multisector presence within a particular country that is not limited to specific projects. Save the Children has longstanding representation in all four countries studied and works in several sectors to support its country-specific goals. Although this might attenuate, to some extent, donors' negotiating position, this presence provides a number of advantages for program implementation. Most importantly, international (and certain national NGOs) have already existing staff, offices, and other infrastructure that can be readily mobilized for a new program. Also, well-established NGOs have developed their own relationships with government officials that can serve the donors' program.

In the increasingly rare cases where donors fund existing NGO programs, donors can make a less binding commitment and mobilize fewer resources to achieve a particular result. Although donors may have less influence over priorities and program design, "piggy-backing" allows them to gain more with a smaller investment.

For USAID, the use of NGOs has a number of additional internal benefits. According to USAID officials, managing grants to NGOs, both local and international, is much easier than managing contracts with local or international firms. Although NGOs might complain that USAID has extensive reporting requirements, for project and contract officers, managing a cooperative agreement or a grant is a considerably less onerous task than overseeing a contract with a consortium of firms.

3. Educational Innovation

NGOs often claim that they offer the opportunity to explore and test educational innovations on a limited basis that can then be generalized by government or donors. New curriculum and teaching approaches, novel funding formulas, and new and more effective partnerships with unexpected stakeholders are all products of NGO programs reviewed by our study and funded with donor resources.

Few donors representatives interviewed in this study mentioned this particular motive, however. As

mentioned above, donor representatives mostly referred to efficiency and ease, rather than experimentation. This may reflect a growing necessity for donor agencies such as USAID to guarantee results to their own constituents. Nevertheless, it is clear that the community school model, strategies to reinforce parents' associations, more participatory teaching and learning methodologies, and new funding mechanisms are NGO innovations that have been adopted by donors and incorporated into their overall education strategy throughout Africa. Although donors might not express this as a benefit from their association with NGOs, it is an observable advantage to this relationship.

4. When Democracy and Governance Meets Education

Donors claim other reasons for using NGOs in the education sector. The most common rationale is greater school accountability to parents. An ongoing tension exists between the twin objectives of educational quality and equitable access on the one hand and greater involvement of "civil society" in overseeing public services on the other. This tension is sometimes bureaucratically translated within donor agencies and between donors and NGOs. For example, the development assistance agenda of USAID missions is defined by "strategic objectives" and groups of agency officials are organized into "S.O. teams" to develop overall strategies, design projects, and monitor results in specific development sectors. In the case of NGO involvement within the education sector, "education S.O. teams" have usually taken the lead. However, "democracy and governance S.O. teams" have also invested in these activities, as they relate to the development of "civil society." A key part of most civil society goals held by democracy and governance programs is to create, strengthen, and sustain organizations that can represent the interests of citizens vis-à-vis government and can respond to public needs alongside government.

Donors appear to see many opportunities for synergy when they pursue both education and civil society objectives. This synergy, however, has not often manifested itself. The World Education program in Mali was the only case of a project jointly financed by two different parts of USAID. One interesting aspect of many country programs is that the same NGOs might be contracted by both S.O teams to conduct separate activities. This strategy has both contributed to the flexibility discussed below and created management difficulties for the NGOs.

The experience of Pact in Ethiopia provides an interesting example. Originally funded out of the USAID mission's Democracy and Governance Strategic Objective, Pact's program focused on both strengthening the institutional capacity for the country's local NGO sector as a whole and building the effectiveness of individual NGOs and NGO networks. However, when USAID reduced its spending in this area, Pact applied to the education and democracy and governance teams for funding. Thus Pact has changed its organizational structure: it now must write proposals for and report on education, health, and other sector specific programs, although they were originally part of the same Pact strategy. There are several consequences, one of which is that it becomes harder to support the activities of many local NGOs, which, like Pact, have programs involving a number of sectors. For example, many local NGOs have activities in both education and microfinance, since communities need to generate income to support schools. Another consequence is that Pact might not be able to continue some of the activities it describes as helping to build an "enabling environment" for local NGOs—activities such as working to improve the NGO registration process, media portrayal of NGOs, collaboration between NGOs and government, and other activities supporting the NGO sector as a whole.

One area where education teams have expressed particular ambivalence is whether participating local NGOs should be given sufficient support to become autonomous organizations. As will be further discussed in the following section, education projects funded by USAID and other donors do not include resources for local NGO capacity building, with one notable exception. CRECCOM in Malawi was created by USAID, which had invested substantial resources to ensure this organization was a fully self-sustaining NGO. Nevertheless, in most cases, donors

see such capacity building objectives as peripheral, particularly those that approach NGOs from an education rather than a civil society perspective.

5. International NGO vs. Local NGO

Should donors work with international NGOs or local NGOs? The two main reasons donors work with NGOs—greater efficiency and accountability on the one hand and the ability to work directly with communities on the other—also interact to influence with whom donors choose to work. In almost all cases, local NGOs are in a better position to work directly with communities because they speak the same language, are located closer to the communities, and are organized to conduct intensive, direct support to communities. However, local NGOs, as will be further discussed in the next section, rarely have the accountability capabilities demanded by donors. For example, GTZ in northern Mali decided to stop working through local NGOs because certain project funds were not accounted for. USAID seldom works directly with national or local NGOs for exactly this reason, as few can meet such strict reporting requirements.

Contracting directly with many local NGOs creates managerial burdens that few donors can or wish to support. As a result donors prefer to contract out to international NGOs. Although almost all stakeholders agree that Guinea's education program has been a resounding success, the Guinean government with the World Bank has decided to transform the program so that all contracting with local NGOs is done through one of ten larger institutions, most of which will be international NGOs. In addition, *Groupe Pivot*'s problems in Mali are evidently a result of donor desire to use an intermediary to work with several local NGOs. This appears to be the favorite way for donors to work with local NGOs. This is more a matter of ease than a practice motivated by any particular development agenda.

C. Using Donors to Implement NGO Programs: The Cost of Additional Resources

This section examines why and how NGOs and donors collaborate in the education sector from the position of NGOs. Why do they solicit donor resources and what are the consequences?

Part of the answer of the first question has been discussed in the above section—NGOs have usually turned to bilateral and international donors to extend their initial programs. Or they appeal to donors to fund a new program in a particular country or region. In both cases, the NGO attempts to generalize a concept or approach that it has found promising.

However, when NGOs submit a proposal or application in a competitive process, the reasons for doing so are less clear. In some cases, an auspicious alignment of interests exists, where the request for proposals or applications largely overlaps with the NGO's mission or priorities. For example, some international NGOs that have bid for either the Guinea or the Ethiopia programs have couched their proposals in terms of their own priorities and objectives. A significant number of local NGOs in all four countries have a geographic regional or local focus. However, in many cases, it is difficult to differentiate between NGOs and firms or entrepreneurs.

In Guinea, a theme raised by almost all interviewees is that many NGOs are actually "fake." Usually referring to local NGOs, interviewees were suspicious of the real motivations of NGOs engaged in the education sector. Interviewees claimed that the local NGOs leaders used these institutions for self-enrichment or as a political vehicle. They purported that many NGOs were actually headed up by former civil servants and well-known, political actors.

A few government officials in Guinea also differentiated between international NGOs that were "nothing more than contractors" and others that they believed had a development agenda. Although reluctant to go into great detail, they viewed NGOs

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that receive donor resources and are integrated into donor programs and those that use other resource bases differently, ascribing more acceptable motivations to the latter.

This study does not investigate the validity of these claims. It seems these claims may reflect the particular political history and culture of Guinea that has bred a suspicion of the private or non-governmental sector and of actors that might be veiled representatives of foreign forces. Moreover, it is often difficult to distinguish between an NGO and any other revenue-making endeavor, particularly in the case of local NGOs in all four countries. Local NGOs that donors tend to support, directly or through an intermediary, are very similar to consulting firms or small businesses. In all four countries, representatives of national and local NGOs themselves often had difficulty differentiating between an NGO and a firm when asked.

What exactly is the difference between an NGO and a firm? In all four countries, one key difference is that an NGO is "non-profit" and a firm is "for-profit." This means that although NGO staff might receive a salary and contract individuals to perform certain tasks, no individual or group makes a profit or fee from their activities. This differentiation is admittedly blurred as staff salary and an entrepreneur's profit might be an equivalent amount. A second difference is usually that NGOs have some sort of development vision or mission. When NGOs seek funding for an intervention that they have designed, this vision or mission is quite clear—they seek to develop a particular region, or to ensure community participation, or to provide an act of charity. However, when they compete for funds, development objectives can be stretched to justify any type of revenue generation. For example, many NGOs affiliated with the World Bank in Guinea focus entirely on constructing schools.

Although an NGO is not a profit-making enterprise, it does provide employment to its staff and thus constitutes a principal source of income for them in all four countries. National and international NGOs in Mali claim to employ 10,000 people, approximately one-third the number of civil servants in the country. The promotion of NGOs by some government actors in all four countries has been couched as an employment generating strategy.

Does it matter that many NGOs are essentially revenue generating institutions for their participants? After all, from the point of the view of donors and government, if the job gets done well, then what real difference does it make? Interviewees nevertheless expected NGOs to have an identity beyond generating revenue. Government actors wanted NGOs to be more than just enterprises. NGO representatives wanted to be contributing to development. Donor representatives regularly justified their support of NGOs in terms of civil society development.

Donors and government may have contributed most to this ambiguity between NGOs and entrepreneurs. In Guinea, working with NGOs is easier and more effective than private firms in the education sector because the national contracting process is onerous and the government cannot ensure the quality of private sector actors. Thus, government regulation itself treats NGOs and private sector agents differently, and creates incentives for any group of individuals to manifest themselves as one or the other. Donors also use different contracting mechanisms for NGOs and other providers of services—as discussed above, in the case of USAID, these different rules make it preferable from a workload basis to work with NGOs rather than other actors. Consequently, it appears that donors and government may be ultimately responsible for the propagation of what many interviewees called "fake NGOs," as they have created conditions where it makes it difficult for development support agents to play an effective role.

1. The Cost of These Resources—Setting Agendas, Priorities, and Timelines

This section focuses on those cases where NGOs have a clear agenda and priorities and what happens when they turn to donors for financing. Although these NGOs are requesting resources to support their program, appealing to donors for financial support leads to a process of negotiated priorities and preferences. Because donors rarely provide

resources with no strings attached, NGOs work with donors to ensure that both NGO and donor objectives and priorities are aligned or respected. Typically, negotiations with donors revolve around three basic issues: scope, cost, agenda.

Scope: Interviewees reported that serious negotiations surround issues of the number of sites, their location, and the extent of intervention, with NGOs usually having a more conservative estimate of what they can or want to do. In Mali, according to international NGO representatives, donors always pressured them to deliver and supervise more community schools than they considered manageable.

Cost: Donors want to pay only for specific activities and results that meet their program objectives. When the donor objective is a specific educational output or outcome, and the NGO objective embraces a wider development vision or agenda, cost becomes particularly relevant. In negotiations between Aide et Action and the French Cooperation, the NGO wanted support to create links between civil society and government in the education sector; the donor wanted to build schools. In this case, the French Cooperation agreed to provide the additional resources necessary to create the links.

Cost is also an issue for NGOs that aim to provide more than specific services to donors. NGOs usually need a financial base to cover overhead costs and fund their own initiatives. Local NGOs are usually at a particular disadvantage because international NGOs often have established overhead coefficients with donors. Also, donors tend to be less willing to finance the overhead costs of local NGOs. Representatives from a number of national NGOs in both Guinea and Mali have indicated that donor refusal to underwrite development or overhead costs has limited their potential for survival.

Agenda: At first, establishing common technical objectives with donors did not seem to be a problem for most NGOs surveyed. This might be a result of self-selection, as NGOs are likely to propose programs in which donors will be interested. Upon closer examination, however, many NGOs navigate between what they want to do, according to their own development vision, and what donors expect from them. For example, as discussed above, World Education has consistently defined its program as aiming to reinforce civil society. However, USAID has financed this program essentially on the basis of its potential contribution to learning and educational access. This has led to serious disagreements regarding the priorities and content of the program.

One strategy many international NGOs use to manage the "lack of fit" between their own objectives and strategies and those of donors is to seek funding from a variety of donor sources and even from different parts of the same donor agency. Consequently, the savvy NGO can straddle both its own objectives and those of specific donors. This requires a certain level of sophistication and organization, as well as the reputation necessary to attract funds from different sources. As a result, it allows NGOs to negotiate better and find room for both their objectives and those of specific donors.

Most local NGOs in Mali that work in the education sector began under the World Education parents' association project. This project both supported institutional capacity building and conducted all interventions through national NGOs. As other donors and international NGOs became increasingly attracted to community schools and involving NGOs in implementation, they turned to these same organizations. Now, three major local NGOs receive funding from at least three different donors to build community schools and facilitate community participation efforts. These NGOs have also expanded into other sectors, such as health, micro-enterprise, and democracy and governance.

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2. The Cost of These Resources—Reporting and Other Administrative Tasks

Aside from competing objectives and priorities, NGOs must also respond to donor demands for accountability. USAID seems to have the most extensive demands for accountability of the donors surveyed. In fact, international and national NGOs representatives indicated that they spend anywhere from 10-25 percent of their management time reporting to USAID on the results of their work. Many NGOs also reported that the administrative demands of donors have increased over time.

Donors usually expect two types of reporting from NGOs: financial and programmatic. Donors typically want NGOs to adopt accepted accounting practices with appropriate bookkeeping practices, paper trails, and regular audits. Donor agencies are accountable to home offices, and have elaborate bureaucratic controls in place to manage financial resources and avoid financial scandals or ambiguity. Representatives from several national NGOs that have multiple funding sources listed USAID as having the most onerous and difficult financial management standards. Rigorous financial controls mean that only those NGOs that have USAID accredited financial systems can have access to resources. Several national NGOs in Mali have complained that working directly with USAID is virtually i[illegible]ble; they must use an intermediary (see below).

Aside from the time it takes, program related reporting can have an insidious impact on program development or evolution. If donors are most interested in a certain type of result, e.g., the number of girls dropping out from school, they will require regular reports from NGOs. Many interviewees confirmed that the reports oriented the program objectives and resources. Resources that could be used to develop other sectors or education activities outside of the scope of agreement between the NGO and the donor are mobilized for reporting. Thus, the demands of donors absorb many more resources than those allocated.

Finally, the reporting demands tend to privilege international NGOs over local NGOs on several accounts. International NGOs such as Save the Children or World Education have developed systems to meet the accountability requirements of USAID that can be "imported" from one country to another. Most expatriate staff already have substantial experience with USAID-funded projects and may have even received training in how to manage reporting requirements. Few national NGOs have the institutional capacity to manage these burdens and are often taken by surprise. CRECCOM, a well-established local NGO in Malawi, reported that early in their relationship with USAID a major difficulty was how money was released to them. Initially, they received money on a monthly basis and could not get the next month's funding until they had accounted for all money they had received. Because money could not be carried over from one month to the next, they fell behind in their implementation schedule, as each month's funding only arrived near the end of the month. Over time, however, USAID gathered evidence about CRECCOM's financial management and finally made the process easier.

D. When NGOs Do Not Use Donor Resources

Finally, we can learn much about the relationship between NGOs and donors by also examining cases where NGOs do not use donor resources.

Not all NGOs seek out bilateral or multilateral donor agencies to fund their programs. In fact, many well-known international NGOs have traditionally financed their activities through sponsorships and private donations, e.g., Save the Children, CARE, Plan International, ActionAid. Several international NGO programs discussed in this paper were started without donor funds. The cases of Plan International and Aide et Action in Guinea and ActionAid in Ethiopia and Malawi provide examples.

Independent programs tend to differ from NGO programs financed by donors in two ways. First, and most importantly, these programs are not held to an explicit contract with deliverables due at specific times. Although these programs have strategic plans with expected results, extensive monitoring and evaluation systems, and regular links with their headquarters, they tend to be more fluid and flexible,

with regular changes in objectives and strategies. Field offices also usually have considerable autonomy, and the ability to develop programs with objectives that are distinct from those headquarters promotes. For example, ActionAid headquarters in London indicated that it was very difficult to generalize about their programs because their country staff has such a high level of independence. CARE International also reports wide differences among its country programs.

As a consequence, the programs of independently financed NGOs have developed more process-oriented programs that try to improve the relationship between government and communities, rather than emphasize specific educational results.

Second, these NGOs programs tend to have a rolling design that does not necessarily contain an "exit" strategy. As they meet one objective, they develop others. The above cases are examples of this evolution. Independent NGOs, however, are concerned with issues of dependence and the unraveling of programs if NGO support ends. International programs that support the creation and maintenance of local NGOs, such as ActionAid in Ethiopia, often try to graduate local NGOs so that they are able to continue their activities on their own or secure funding elsewhere. CRECCOM in Malawi is a graduate of a USAID contractor. However, international NGOs do not tend to establish specific dates for when their support will end.

The experience of these NGOs brings to light a fundamental difference in NGOs' and donors' approach to development work. NGOs and donors often operate under different perspectives regarding the time frame for exit. NGOs do not necessarily see themselves as entities that will work themselves out of a job. Local and international NGOs seek a permanent presence that reflects their overall vision of the role of NGOs in society. Although they usually have a keen interest in encouraging sustainability, their program is one that evolves naturally, continually redefining its activities in the sector in accordance with changing needs. Because donors need to account for resources to a constituency, they seek finite and defined results within the shortest time frame possible. Also, donors cannot espouse an evolving role in society because of evident issues of sovereignty.

E. Conclusions

Fundamentally, the relationship between donor and NGO is a strained one. This is not necessarily a bad thing. Rather, it is a reality that must be considered when donors and NGOs interact. The objectives of donors and NGOs in the education sector are actually not very different in most cases; they are both interested in greater access, equity, and quality, particularly for the more disadvantaged populations of a particular country. The discussion above indicates, however, that differences in strategy and intermediate objectives exist and that these will constitute the key issue in negotiating a relationship between donors and NGOs.

NGOs and donors are also in an unequal relationship. Those NGOs that have a diversified resource base, in terms of finance, people, and infrastructure, can easily absorb the differences. Others that negotiate with donors from a perspective of relative weakness will have to align themselves more narrowly to the way donors express their own education agendas.

NGOs can, of course, decide to reject funds if they find donor demands to be too onerous. This has only happened in one case in the four countries studied. Plan International decided not to continue working with the SAGE project in Guinea. The management burden reached a level they concluded was not acceptable and they decided to reorient their focus towards other objectives. As described below, they could afford to stop working on the project because they have many other sources of revenue.

Alternatively, NGOs can seek out resources that require the least degree of compromise. Save the Children's program in Ethiopia, for example, is part of a larger project financed by Banyan Tree, a small, private donor. Banyan Tree offers grants that are designed to free NGOs from donor-designed competitions for funding to increase the ability of NGOs to be innovative.

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However, this study indicates that few NGOs are "free" from the need for donor resources. In fact, many NGOs surveyed began programs with their own resources and eventually found it necessary to seek new sources of revenue from donors. Ultimately, this means that they must consider the different paradigm under which donors function. Local and national NGOs must quickly learn the lessons that international NGOs learned some time ago—to be taken seriously by donors, organizations must be professionalized.

Donors on the other hand must realize that their need for results and timely and cost-effective execution of projects should not overshadow other benefits of NGOs in the education sector. After all, if not for NGOs, community schools, alternative pedagogical methods, and school-based community participation would not be incorporated into new project designs. None of these innovations were hatched from contractual relations between NGOs and donors, but rather were products of funding arrangements that made few demands on NGOs for accountability or results. In fact, by focusing too narrowly on NGOs as efficient deliverers of services, donors and governments create a context that can blur the distinction between NGOs and the private sector, to the detriment of both.

Chapter V. How NGOs Influence Civil Society

One underlying belief that has fueled the increasing use of NGOs to implement education programs is that NGOs are important in developing civil society, which is thought to be essential to the establishment and maintenance of democracy. This chapter explores why governments, donors, and international NGOs believe that developing civil society is important and how variations in these beliefs have supported different types of NGO activities. Sections B, C and D examine three categories of NGO activities that potentially have an impact on civil society—programs to empower communities, attempts to build the institutional strength of local NGOs, and support for NGO networks to engage in advocacy for policy change and government commitment.

A. Differing Perspectives on Strengthening Civil Society

International NGOs. All international NGOs interviewed for this research see their role as more than a conduit for resources to disadvantaged communities and/or influencing national education policies. International NGOs generally ground their role in ***empowerment***, a process that enhances people's ability to achieve their human rights, emancipates them from political and bureaucratic systems that negatively affect them, and exerts demands on the state. Empowered individuals and communities can lead to a stronger civil society. Some international NGOs see developing civil society as a main objective, while others are less interested in building civil society for its own sake than as a means to an end, such as improving education. More and better education can, in itself, improve citizens' capacity to build networks of responsibilities and rights that constitute a strong civil society. And increasing local involvement in the institutions that support education—structures of civil society—can strengthen the organizations themselves.

Donors. In the literature on NGO involvement in education two rationales appear for why NGOs are selected to implement programs. One is the familiarity of NGOs with involvement on a local, community level. The other is the role NGOs are believed to play in strengthening civil society. The prevailing view among donors is that African nations will not experience sustainable change without being transformed into more democratic societies. And donors generally assume that the process of ***democratization*** is linked to a civil society because the nature of democratic systems calls for broad-based participation. Civil society, the configuration of social relations, institutional roles, and rights and obligations through which the people of a country have a means for influencing those who rule, can provide the structure for a participatory, democratic society.

Governments. Although a stronger civil society should be able to control government actions, governments are not necessarily opposed to strengthening civil society. Having the institutions of modern society—media, unions, professional organizations, universities, etc.—is modern and how African governments would like to be seen. In addition, governments in Africa tend to see civil society as linked to a ***modernization*** process where modern citizens will take greater responsibility for improving their lives—a process believed to promote economic development. This view of civil society is appealing to the government because the process unburdens the state and reduces some of its responsibilities toward its citizens.

Although support for strengthening civil society comes from each of these perspectives, the assumptions made about why civil society should be developed leads to major differences in what types of activities are supported by governments, donors, and international NGOs.

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System to Strengthen	Activities	Supported by:		
		Government	*Donor*	*INGO*
Community	Changing attitudes about education; creating expectations for educational services; invigorating local educational organizations; providing participatory experience in planning, managing, negotiating and implementing educational changes	Support NGO involvement as part of modernization process	Support NGO involvement as part of a democratization process	Support own involvement and that of local NGOs as part of an empowerment process
Local NGOs	Hiring local NGOs to implement programs; providing training to increase capacity; supporting innovations based on understanding of local needs and culture; building NGO networks		Support local NGOs as sustainable links to communities for program implementation	Support local NGOs as institutions of civil society and as links to communities for program implementation
Advocacy Networks	Advocating for policy change and/or government fulfillment of commitments; training local NGOs as advocates; promoting advocacy agendas for NGO networks			Support NGO networks to advocate for policy change and government commitment

The international NGOs, donors and governments that provided information for this study support developing civil society on a local level. In general, governments have been somewhat oblivious to the community empowerment efforts of international NGOs and they do not see stronger communities as a threat. Rather, they believe NGO activities will increase community contribution of resources, which will ease government responsibility. A member of the MOE in Malawi, frustrated by recent advocacy activities by NGOs, made an interesting statement about civil society. He said, "[The NGOs] are trying to operate on the wrong level. They want to be on the same level as the government. Civil society is out there in the communities." From the government perspective, greater individual and community participation in civil society possess relatively little threat to the security and control of the government, while civil society organizations operating "on the same level as the government" do.

Only a few international NGOs, and no donors or governments, use advocacy as a means to hold governments to their commitments or to encourage policy changes. Between the extremes of national advocacy and community development, some international NGOs and some donors also support stronger local NGOs as a way to build the institutional structure of civil society. The governments have been more nervous about strengthening local NGOs than about community empowerment because, in Ethiopia and Malawi at least, they are concerned about possible local NGO involvement in politics.

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B. How NGOs Strengthen Civil Society in Communities

1. Changing Attitudes

Governments, donors, and international NGOs all believe that the NGOs working in education can have a direct impact on community empowerment. Local non-government civil society organizations can lobby for better educational services. Even if the direct goal is to improve education, organizing around education can turn community members into local activists. All NGOs studied are involved in a range of community-based activities and, therefore, support the development of civil society on a local level. In general, governments have ignored community empowerment efforts of NGOs, because these NGO activities encourage communities to contribute resources which eases the government's burden.

From the government perspective, the impact of NGOs on civil society is generally construed as an "awakening" of communities to the importance of schooling. Sensitization campaigns and social mobilization programs generally begin with the assumption that communities must be convinced of the benefits of education for all children, especially for girls. And everyone seems to agree that one of the most important successes of NGOs working in education has been increased access to education. Even the choice to send more children to school can create more active involvement in monitoring local schooling. Several NGOs have reported that sponsorship programs alone have led villagers to question local leaders about the lack of money directed to the school and decisions about management of school/teachers well before any activities were implemented to bolster community participation. Asking community members to contribute to improve the school creates a sense of ownership that can change community attitude.

How NGOs engage in local education has a great deal to do with the degree to which communities become empowered. Participatory approaches work with the community as a whole, facilitating group processes of analysis, decision-making, planning, and negotiation. When participatory techniques are used, the community often recognizes its ability to identify and solve their own problems. In addition, being encouraged to act as an organized social unit rather than a group of individuals, puts in place the basic requirement for communities to act in their own best interests to ensure better education for their children. The results in the short term might mirror the immediate educational goals, such as more girls enrolled in school or more labor offered for school building, but they have different impacts on the longer term goal of strengthening civil society.

Although most NGOs in the study claimed to be participatory, little consensus existed about what participation meant in practice. The initial stage of most NGO programs involved consulting the communities by using participatory techniques to identify and prioritize their education problems, assess possible options and opportunities to solve these problems, and select strategies. Nevertheless, NGOs in most cases retained most decision-making power and sometimes used participation to achieve its own goals.

2. Creating Expectations

In Mali, the objective of both World Education and Save the Children programs is to create viable civil society organizations at the community level. Save's community school program in Mali was designed to resemble the BRAC model: providing four years of schooling to a cohort of students, graduating them, and then beginning again with a new cohort of students who would receive four years of education. However, the communities, told that they "owned" the schools throughout the four-year process, objected to the next stage of plans. If they owned the school, then they believed that they should be able to dictate the learning structure, and they did not want their children to stop their education at four years. Save explained that teachers who teach French after the fourth grade were not available, but the community said they would find a way to pay to bring such teachers to "their" school.

The objective of World Education's program in Mali is to transform local parents' associations into organizations that represent the parents' interests. Whether they have succeeded in this or not is

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difficult to determine. Although who determines the agenda is unclear, parents' associations have been successfully established to deliver services and mobilize resources, which has led to new demands. These include demands for more teachers, materials and infrastructure. The definition of educational quality is changing, with implications for teacher qualification and the provision of pedagogical materials. The continuous "spiraling up" of education expectations represents both the success and the challenge of a maturing parents' association. Successful community mobilization has led to an increase in expectations and, as a consequence, to a situation where demand for more and better education outstrips the community's capacity, even with international NGO assistance, to meet this demand. The community school has transformed the way citizens relate to the education system. The demands that they now make on their schools will eventually coalesce into demands upon the state for a more responsive school experience. Fundamentally, the vehicle of the community school has helped World Education attain one of its principal objectives—the creation of a civil society lobby.

3. Building Organizations

Community empowerment comes from shifting attitudes, brought about through new expectations and increased participation, and having an organization through which to operate and make their demands known. A number of NGOs have created school committees or parent organizations as the first step toward creating a community school. They have also trained existing school committees and parent organizations in a variety of ways, from more concrete skills, such as accounting or the rights and responsibilities of the organization, to more abstract skills, such as negotiation and building community support.

However, training of school committees and parent organizations does not necessarily make them community representatives. One issue concerns the members of school committees and parents' associations and how open these members are to other voices in the community. In fact, these organizations rarely include a representative sample of the community. In Mali, parents' associations have often been taken over by local elites who are more interested in maintaining their position than representing anyone's interest. In Guinea, Save the Children became involved in a long debate with the government over the composition of the school committee because including teachers interfered with its ability to articulate community concerns. In Ethiopia, school management committees include teachers and government representatives, such as heads of local women's or farmers' associations, who are said by the government to represent the community. School committees created by communities are more representative than those defined by the government in programs supported by Save and ActionAid in Ethiopia. They have avoided conflict with government specifications of who should be on school committees because of their non-formal status.

4. Product or Process

Questions also emerge about how NGOs actually interact with communities and community organizations. Does the interaction strengthen communities? The assumptions that the NGOs implementing the educational program make about the goals of the program can influence how they interact with communities. For example, is the project about accomplishing short-term improvements in local education? Or is it about building a community that can make decisions and lobby for its rights?

In Ethiopia, a project designed to support improvements in educational quality, girls' participation, and community involvement through building the capacity and motivation of school management committees was implemented in two different regions by different NGOs, Tigray Development Association (TDA) in the Tigray Region and World Learning in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region. In both projects, school management committees received training and on-going mentoring as they developed strategies to address these goals, translated their strategies into proposals to secure incentive grants of increasingly greater amounts, and implemented the plans they had created. TDA saw the project as being about getting the community to offer more financial and

labor support to government schools. World Learning believed that the same project was about community participation in decision making and management capacity building. Perhaps the clearest indication of how these differences in goals were translated into differences in the programs can be seen in the criteria used to award incentive grants.

TDA determined that there was enough money available to give the first level incentive grants to 600 rural schools in the region, to give the second grant to 400 of those schools, and award 200 schools with the third level of grant. The first level grant was simply given to all schools which met the TDA criteria for being sufficiently rural, needy, and densely populated. These 600 schools were then rated by TDA according to criteria such as effectiveness and community resource capacity to select 400 schools for the second grant. These 400 schools were then rated according to indicators of change such as improved enrollment rates, reduced dropout rates, and reduced repetition rates to determine which 200 would receive the largest grant. The focus of the program was on getting the money to the schools and rewarding the highest performing schools, the competition among schools being seen as desirable to stimulate increased community contribution.

World Learning's focus was on leading school committees, communities, and school personnel through a learning experience, the incentive grants being used to motivate them to participate in this experience and provide something to actually manage. Criteria for receiving the first level grant included committee members meeting to prepare a strategic plan and holding an open house for the community to explain their plans. The second phase grant was awarded after criteria such as establishing a code of professional ethics for teachers, establishing basic learning standards for students, and developing a clear plan to recruit and keep more girls in school had been met. Stage three required criteria focused more closely on education quality and include a requirement that schools have secured additional funding from some source other than World Learning. Because it took school committees much longer to meet these criteria than the criteria used by TDA, some schools were still struggling to get their first grant while others had already received a third grant and there was no need to select among schools on a competitive basis.

Basically, for TDA, "community participation" meant community contributions of money and/or labor and "improvements in quality" involved physical inputs to the school. For World Learning, the goals were to improve educational quality and girls' participation through increased school ownership, management skills, and teacher commitment and for communities to achieve a greater voice in decisions made about their school, as well as greater involvement through their contributions. Although the initial designs for these programs were identical, NGO implementation provided enough room for extremely different projects to emerge based on the NGOs goals.

5. Does Community Strengthening "Trickle Up?"

A stronger civil society is expected to mediate between individuals and the state. If the first link is to organize individuals within their communities, then NGOs are engaged in building and strengthening local, community-level civil society. NGOs, however, have only rarely been involved in assisting communities to create links to other organizations. Although NGOs report that they wish to "help parents demand better education," NGOs generally work in isolation rather than as part of a network of social organizations. Changes in participation, expectations, and organization within communities can generate demands that force communities to construct their own links to the larger society. World Learning has pushed communities to seek funding from other organizations and World Education has organized parents' associations into a nested representative structure from community through district and regional levels. In Ethiopia, ActionAid has organized an education committee of NGOs in a district to interact with the district government education personnel. NGOs and donors increasingly support the construction of these links to increase sustainability of the program. However, through rarely mentioned, these connections are necessary for civil society to be built from the bottom up.

C. Strengthening Civil Society through Local NGOs

1. Why Strengthen Local NGOs?

Both donors and international NGOs assume that creating stronger local NGOs can strengthen civil society by enabling these local institutions to become viable forces. Donors expect that NGOs will foster democracy because they can strengthen local institutions as civic actors—enabling them to link horizontally and vertically into mass movements that will provide organized countervailing power to the state. Donors and international NGOs believe that supporting local NGO involvement in education will increase the sustainability of programs. In terms of sustainability, even some governments might believe that strengthening local NGOs is of key importance. In Ethiopia, the Prime Minister has stated that international NGOs should build the capacity of local counterparts and thus prepare their own exit strategy. There is also a practical reason both donors and international NGOs support strengthening local NGOs. In most countries, local NGOs provide a functional organizational link, including the needed language skills, knowledge of local culture, and proximity, which can be used to reach communities to implement programs. Logically, if civil society is an array of organizations and institutions located between the family and the state, then the strengthening of civic organizations, singly and as networks or alliances, should strengthen civil society in general.

2. How Local NGOs Are Strengthened

The major goal in strengthening local NGOs is to build organizations that will continue to work to expand and improve education whether or not donors or international NGOs remain. Two approaches have been used to build local NGO ability. In Mali and Guinea, local NGOs are generally hired as contractors to implement projects managed by international NGOs or the government. In contrast, international NGOs support a number of local NGOs in Ethiopia to continue their own activities in education. These differences may reflect national differences in NGO involvement in the education sector: in Mali and Guinea, no NGOs worked in the education sector before the World Bank project in Guinea and the Save the Children project in Mali; in Malawi, local NGOs, primarily religious institutions, have been very involved in education for decades; and in Ethiopia, a variety of local NGOs have sprung up in recent years to meet local educational needs. No data at this time show that one approach supports local NGO empowerment as a sustainable force within civil society better than another. Still international NGOs working in a number of different circumstances in Africa believe that local NGO sustainability is increased by supplementing existing activities, while hiring them to do a job is only a short-term influx of funding. Another reason to support local NGOs' own activities is to bring new ideas and promote multiple, context-specific experiments, that can improve the range of options available for solving educational problems.

Strengthening local NGOs is important to improve education and civil society, whether through simply hiring them as contractors or supporting their own activities. The sense in Mali and Guinea is that local NGOs eventually come into their own as organizations after working for international NGOs. Almost all local NGOs in the four countries receive capacity building training while working for international NGOs or donors. One local NGO in Malawi, CRECCOM, began as a community participation component of a USAID project, but has now grown into a very successful, independent, local NGO. The staff of CRECCOM has described that evolution and how different it is to work for an organization that controls its own decisions and strategies, as compared to implementing a program designed outside the county, where decisions were not made according to a "Malawian way of doing things."

In Ethiopia, ActionAid, Save the Children, and Pact, operating from somewhat different philosophies and funding sources, have all supported local NGOs in existing or planned education activities. Some funding has come from the "Learning for Leverage in Education" project supported by Banyan Tree Foundation. The project was designed to address unmet basic education needs by strengthening education NGOs in five countries in East Africa

through capacity-building grants and research. The goals include stimulating basic experimentation by local NGOs, strengthening local NGO capacity in basic education, and widening the influences of local NGO experience on national education efforts. The support consists of long-term grants to international NGOs to build capacity of local NGOs, a series of annual subgrants to local NGOs to fund their education activities, international NGO training and technical assistance for local NGO staff, personnel exchanges and workshops among the international and local NGO staff members to share experience, and periodic cross-site evaluations to synthesize findings. Because, in Africa, small, local NGOs are difficult to reach directly, one international NGO has taken the lead in each country. In Ethiopia, Save the Children has been working with ten local NGOs to encourage them to explore new ways to work that are effective and appropriate. Capacity building involves long-term mentoring, not single courses, and focuses on learning about basic education content as well as organizational skills. All local NGOs have to seek their own funding elsewhere eventually.

One problem with the Banyan Tree approach has been that the selection of small emerging NGOs with limited program and organizational capacity spread across wide areas has limited their ability to influence educational policy and civil society. Pact has supported local NGOs in Ethiopia through USAID democracy and governance and education funding. Pact seeks to build the capacity of local NGOs to carry out effective programs, and also addresses the entire environment within which the NGOs operate. This project supported developing an NGO Code of Conduct, which, in turn, has eased government suspicions, improved perceptions of NGOs in the media, supported improvements in the NGO registration process, designed and implemented exchanges among government officials and local NGOs, and helped work toward new government policies, that will allow NGOs to be more effective. In addition to strengthening management and technical skills and working to create a better environment within which local NGOs can operate, Pact also attempts to teach local NGOs processes and mediation skills to interact with both the government and communities.

3. Creating NGO Networks

Strengthening communities without linking them to other organizations is not sufficient for promoting civil society. Similarly local NGOs will be strengthened if they are linked to each other. A range of different experiences with NGO networks and alliances were reported in the countries involved in this research. In some cases, civil society institutions have resisted the activities of NGO networks. For example, in Mali and Guinea, teacher unions developed an intense animosity toward international and national NGOs. Yet, in Malawi, the teachers union is an active member of a strong NGO network. The relationships with governments are also varied in different networks, running from government-created NGO umbrella organizations used to control NGOs, to NGO networks that include the government as a member to facilitate understanding, to NGO networks that are confrontational.

Ethiopia: The Basic Education Network. The Basic Education Network (BEN) was established to promote alternative education programs and to allow NGOs working in education to collaborate and share information. The network was primarily supported by two international NGOs, Save the Children and Pact, but has also received assistance from ActionAid, Redd Barna, and World Learning. BEN lacks a telephone, email, a vehicle, copiers, etc., but its biggest problem has been that government regulations prevent it from registering, which means it is not legal. BEN has solved the problem by locating itself within a local NGO that is registered, the Adult and Non-formal Education Association of Ethiopia (ANFEAE). But this creates difficulties, as ANFEAE is not allowed to work with an association that is not legally recognized. To date its major activities have been a workshop conducted on the state of basic education in Ethiopia and assistance to the government in the selection of programs to be examined by the MOE. If and when BEN becomes registered in Ethiopia, it may find a more purposeful role to play.

Mali: The Groupe Pivot. The Groupe Pivot is a consortium of NGOs in Mali that came together

initially out of a shared interest in the education sector. The Groupe later obtained financing from USAID and Save the Children and became an advocate for community schools. As described in Chapter Three, Groupe Pivot engaged in policy dialogue with national officials and presented a common front to influence changes in policy. Its big policy change success was getting government to expand community schools. But Groupe Pivot started having problems after two major events. Once community schools were incorporated into the education system the consortium did not have a clear advocacy agenda. As a consequence, they could not agree on a reason to exist. This led to the decision to contract with donors as an intermediary for local NGOs. Groupe Pivote lacked the mandate, experience, and expertise to assume this type of activity and their management of activities led to accusations of mishandling of funds. Over time the Groupe's importance and effectiveness in education have declined.

Malawi. A number of different NGO network approaches have emerged in recent years.

The NGO-Government Alliance for Basic Education emerged when a number of NGOs worked together to advocate for education policy changes. According to government officials, the relationship between NGOs and government was at an all time low when the Alliance formed. The Alliance decided to extend membership to the government to ensure that the government saw them as a partner and not an opponent. A local NGO heads the Alliance, but its formation was facilitated by the international NGO ActionAid. The Alliance believes that its role is to bring government closer to NGOs and foster a new relationship and understanding between the government and NGOs working in education.

The Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education grew out of the international NGO Oxfam's focus on advocacy as part of its global campaign for education for all, teamed with ActionAid's investigation into how civil society could support education in Malawi. The Coalition, as discussed more completely in the next section, has lobbied the MOE and Parliament and won recognition for their priorities in education. Although the Teachers Union of Malawi often represents the Coalition, CARE International heads the organization. Coalition members believe that "confrontation is how it works," a philosophy that has made it unpopular with the government and may have contributed to the restrictions on NGOs imposed by the new NGO law.

The Council for Non-Government Organizations (CONGOMA) is a government-sponsored, umbrella organization administered through the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services. The new NGO law requires NGOs to become members of CONGOMA within twelve months of the law being passed. The government believes that it is responsible for monitoring the activities of NGOs and CONGOMA's role will be to keep track of and regulate those activities.

D. Strengthening Civil Society through Advocacy

1. Why Advocacy?

Central offices of some international NGOs have come to see advocacy as a useful way to influence improvements in education because neither community nor local NGO strengthening tackles the issue of government commitment or policy. There is great variation in advocacy activities among NGOs. Some NGOs, such as Save the Children, advocate only about what they have learned from their own experience while others, such as CARE, operate from a more general rights-based approach. Differences also exist between central office philosophies and field office activities, and this creates an even greater range of approaches to advocacy. Although most NGOs seem to ground their advocacy in actual experiences, an increasing number recognize the need to monitor education policy at national levels even when those policies do not directly influence their programs.

The general context under which NGOs operate has evolved considerably in the last decade. At the Education for All meeting in Dakar in 2000, Oxfam and ActionAid took the lead in the protests about

being excluded from the meetings, which culminated with their inclusion. One result has been a different type of NGO involvement in education, which differs from the implementation role of NGO projects in education triggered by the Jomtien meetings. The demand for inclusion by international NGOs at Dakar resulted in a sense that NGOs now have an agenda of their own.

2. The Civil Society Coalition for Quality Education

Oxfam and ActionAid worked together to address national policies by training local NGOs as advocates. They also assessed the basic education sector in Malawi to establish the value that civil society organizations could bring to the sector. Following this assessment, civil society organizations involved in basic education were invited to form a coalition—the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Education. While its membership continues to fluctuate, this coalition has become a significant part of the NGO context in Malawi. Considering that one of their first initiatives was a newspaper attack on MOE teacher training, it is not surprising that the government has reacted negatively to the Coalition.

The head of the new CARE International project on strengthening primary school management is the current chair of the Coalition. For CARE, this creates some conflicts of interest because they build capacity of local NGOs involved in education. This means CARE will have to carefully divorce the capacity building activities from its work with NGOs in the Coalition. ActionAid withdrew from the Coalition when the government was not included as a member. CARE, Oxfam, the Teachers Union of Malawi, and the other Coalition members believe that that advocacy targets government and, consequently, government should not be a member. The Coalition believes that it cannot include the government because "it has to be strong in itself to come to government." The MOE is concerned with NGOs trying to operate "on [the same] level with the government." ActionAid believes that NGOs need to work with government as a partner and has remained a member of the more conservative and Malawian NGO dominated NGO-Government Alliance. These two NGO networks use very different approaches to advocacy for policy change and their differences have polarized the NGO community in the education sector. Attempts to bring the two together have met with little success.

Recently, the Coalition advocated for its priority education issues with both the MOE and Parliament. A member of the Teachers Union of Malawi (TUM) presented the Coalition's position to give budget priority to educating teachers, teaching and learning materials, and improving teacher salaries and conditions.

These advocacy activities may yield results: first, the government may endorse the Coalition's priority issues and, second, the strategic involvement of TUM may help change the public's and government's negative perception of the Coalition. In fact, the MOE has invited the Coalition to participate in the 2002 education sector review.

This organization is part of a wider network of civil society groups who have been lobbying for policy change in Malawi and whose activities have become more pronounced recently as the country develops its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Currently the Coalition is participating in the civil society budget watch, which is monitoring the implementation of the budget as part of funding conditionalities. The Coalition is tracking the budget spending in the three priority expenditures of the education budget for which they advocated. The entire process is under the umbrella of the National Democratic Institute, which is currently involved in working with Parliament on various aspects of governance.

E. Conclusion

NGO support for developing civil society has taken very different paths in each country.

Mali. With the exception of the Groupe Pivot NGO network, most NGO support to strengthen civil society has taken place at the community level. Both donors and government support this NGO focus. While local NGOs have been supported as sub-contractors, relatively few attempts have been made to strengthen them as components of civil society. But the many community schools that have evolved

have changed community expectations, and this has turned the communities into a powerful force for demanding services from the government.

Guinea. Although most NGO activity in Guinea has also been directed toward strengthening communities, the large school construction project funded by World Bank and implemented by local NGOs could have unforeseen results. Here the government has inadvertently encouraged local NGOs to proliferate because they use them as intermediaries. Their numbers and the reputation they are gaining through the success of the project could establish them as a civil society force between the community and government levels.

Ethiopia. Government controls on NGOs and the decentralization of government both encourage small, local programs rather than pilot models that can be scaled up through replication. While almost all NGO programs in Ethiopia are community-based and include educational improvements and strengthening communities as goals, the extremely weak civil society in Ethiopia has attracted the attention of a number of international NGOs. Often operating with private funding, international NGOs have focused their attention on strengthening local NGOs both as an approach to build civil society and as a means to improve education. The government, which is suspicious of foreign influences, likes this approach and has directly supported the idea of building the capacity of local NGOs.

Malawi. Of the four countries studied, only Malawi engages in adversarial advocacy. The government of Malawi has successfully contained NGO activities in education, while allowing room for NGO contributions. Given the government's strong resistance to community school models, few NGOs have attempted to supply education, and donors limit their support to NGOs. UNICEF, for example, only funds NGOs involved in classroom construction. The growing strength of NGOs, due to their increasing size and, more specifically, the growth of the number and size of education programs, plus recognition of their influence, makes advocacy appealing when other avenues for substantial change are not open to NGOs.

The approach that will have the greatest impact is determined to a large degree by the current strength of civil society in the country, so it is not possible to compare their successes. What emerges as a consistent theme in each type of civil society institution strengthening is for these organizations to have real tasks and reasons to exist; they cannot serve only as structures for civil society. Research has shown that capacity building for local school committees and PTAs generally only works if they have something to manage—a grant, a project, or new responsibilities. Local NGOs become strong when they define their own activities rather than operating as contractors. NGO networks have become strong organizations when they have advocated or lobbied for specific policy changes.

Chapter VI. Summary and Lessons Learned

If the experience in the four countries under study here can be generalized, NGOs have become an integrated and important component of education systems throughout Africa. Considerable variation exists from country to country, region to region, and within the education sector. However, the study found that across all four countries, NGOs increasingly participate in and contribute to the delivery of educational services, influence education policy, and are included by donors and government in different aspects of the education system.

This study does not indicate that NGOs "should" or "should not" play a role in the education sector. Rather, its findings inform a more pragmatic question. Given their presence in the education sector, what factors need to be considered to ensure that NGOs contribute most effectively to educational development?

This study used stakeholder analysis as the principal method for understanding the role of NGOs in the education sector. It bases its findings on the contrasting opinions of education stakeholders who participate in and observe NGO education activities.

The following sections summarize the principal arguments, findings, and conclusions of each chapter presented in this document.

A. How Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations Interact

We identified three types of dynamic that affect government-NGO interaction in the four countries studied. First, government and NGO representatives tend to have contrasting assumptions about their respective rights and responsibilities in the education sector. Second, government and NGOs hold differing notions of the capacity each possesses to provide adequate educational services. Third, they hold distinctly different perceptions of what motivates and limits the educational activities each undertakes. We found that together, these dynamics explained the evolution of NGO-government relations in a particular country. Although differences existed between countries as to the "starting points" from which respective government and NGO actors entered each dynamic, and subsequent interactions were not identical, we found a substantial similarity across countries as to how these dynamics shaped NGO-government relations.

NGOs and government officials interviewed in the four countries have distinctly different visions as to the legitimate role of each actor in the education sector. Although the nuance differed, government officials in each country expressed the position that government was the principal actor accountable for education development and this fact shaped the role that could and should be played by NGOs. The role and interventions of NGOs in the education sector are ***an affair of government***.

NGO officials, on the other hand, view their intervention through an entirely different lens. They begin by identifying an urgent development need that has been neglected by other actors or concerns disadvantaged populations. They then mobilize the resources and actors necessary to meet this urgent need. Thus, the role and interventions of NGOs are a matter of ***moral responsibility*** defined in their own terms.

This difference of perspective manifests itself into different types of behavior. In all cases, government officials translate their perspective into actions that aim to ***regulate*** the interventions and scope of activity of NGOs. NGOs are intervening in an area for which government is ultimately accountable—it follows that government should control what NGOs do in this area. They regulate through NGO licensing requirements, prescribing the scope of NGO interventions geographically, and by setting standards to which NGO educational activities are held.

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Ironically, a government's heightened suspicion of NGO work can contribute to more familiarity and consequently to better relations. In the case of Ethiopia and Guinea, government distrust of NGOs led to more monitoring and controls, which in turn created mechanisms for communication and subsequent collaboration between NGOs and government.

International and local NGOs will work where they see the most need for their assistance, and this tends to be with the most disadvantaged communities where governments have the greatest difficulty providing services. NGOs have supplied resources directly to these communities (schools, teachers, and pedagogical supplies), implemented community participation methodologies that aim to help communities mobilize their own and other resources to meet development needs, and provided capacity building to local institutions (i.e., parents' associations and school committees).

The interaction of these two perspectives has defined NGO-government relations along a continuum. In the least collaborative cases, government reacts to NGO interventions as trespassing and an affront to government legitimacy. NGOs, on the other hand, treat government as a constraint to be ignored or avoided in order to meet their self-appointed moral mandate. Under a more collaborative scenario, government welcomes NGO activity within a domain where it is unable to intervene, such as at the community level in disadvantaged areas, and NGOs encourage government to participate and guide their activities for the purposes of mutual learning. In the four cases studied, NGO-government relations have tended to resemble the least collaborative end of the spectrum at earlier stages and have evolved to a more collaborative point along this continuum.

Government and NGOs hold contrasting beliefs regarding their respective abilities. Governments' staff has ***accredited*** training and ***recognized*** experience in education to design and manage the country's education system. They often consider the sanctioned qualification of education officials (teachers, inspectors, etc.) as the *sine qua non* of legitimately functioning in the education sector.

NGOs, on the other hand, hire their own staff to take on educational responsibilities and often provide them with the necessary training to perform specific tasks (teacher training, supervision of school construction, design of pedagogical materials, development of curriculum). The qualification of staff meets the practical needs of the NGO in question.

As a consequence, government officials tend to judge the quality of NGO staff against the defined official qualifications. When such qualifications are lacking, they might insist on some sort of monitoring and evaluation or even expect the staff in question to stop performing the function in question. Government officials claim that government is responsible to maintain quality, standards, and uniformity and often feel that NGOs deliberately ignore government policy. Governments also sometimes fear that NGOs' education activities could undermine government legitimacy if seen as superior.

NGOs judge the performance of both government and their own staff by whether their overall development objectives in a particular community are met. As a consequence, NGOs working in education in Africa judge government capacity as lacking because the communities they target have, by definition, poor quality and insufficient schooling opportunities. Under these circumstances, NGO support to community schools, for example, is a pragmatic response to the lack of sufficient services. For government, these interventions do not meet minimal quality standards and thus are not acceptable.

The resulting interaction can also be construed as points along a continuum. In the least collaborative case, NGOs have concluded that government is essentially incompetent because of glaring insufficiencies in the supply of education. On the other hand, government officials vehemently oppose the sub-standard education provided by sub-standard staff. Under the best circumstances, NGOs and governments recognize their mutual strengths and weaknesses and find ways to collaborate pragmatically to reach mutual objectives.

Finally, NGOs and government officials hold certain prejudices regarding what in fact motivates the other and have firm beliefs as to what motivates their own behavior. For government, NGO interventions are suspect because they are not answerable to the public in the same way that government is. Also, NGOs require outside resources to function. As a consequence, they view NGOs as unfettered by true responsibility and potentially opportunistic. On the other hand, government action is motivated by the interests of the citizenry. For NGOs, governments are conservative and cautious and view all innovations as challenges to vested interests. They view their own interventions as innovative and unshackled from unnecessary bureaucracy.

In the least collaborative case, government officials view NGOs as profiteers, "frauds," and harborers of subversives. NGOs, in this scenario, view government officials as probably corrupt bureaucrats who have no interest in promoting change in disadvantaged areas. Such mutual animosity has been recorded.

These mutual characterizations are not usually informed by much true knowledge of either side. We found that exposure usually breeds familiarity and softens suspicions. At local levels, NGO and government have more quickly found it necessary to collaborate and even become interdependent. Forums and regular meetings, even of a symbolic nature, appear to contribute to changing prejudices that lead to unproductive actions.

The study concludes that tension between these two actors is inevitable and should be expected when NGOs work in the education sector. No one should be surprised that when NGOs attempt to establish a presence in the sector that government will react with concern and suspicion. This does not mean that NGOs should not work in the education sector. It does, however, indicate that these reactions must be addressed.

Lessons Learned

First, NGOs must involve the government to be effective. Many development agents hold the position that NGOs fill a gap left void by government and that contact should consequently be avoided. Such a starting hypothesis creates unnecessary antagonism.

Second, familiarity has a positive effect on relations between government and NGOs. At local levels, when government and NGO officials are obliged to interact, they quickly establish mechanisms of communication.

Finally, it is unclear whether a more collaborative relationship between NGOs and government can be precipitated. The greatest collaboration between NGOs and government can be observed in Mali, which has the longest standing presence of NGOs in the education sector. Aide et Action in Guinea is consciously trying to involve NGOs in the Ministry of Education activities and the government in the activities of NGOs working in the education sector. The Education Alliance in Malawi supports a similar approach. These last endeavors have been initiated quite recently and thus little can yet be learned from their experiences. However, one of the general lessons learned from NGO/government interaction is that collaboration and integration are necessary if NGOs and government are to achieve their education objectives.

B. Education Policy and NGOs

NGOs confront the contours of government activity by their very presence and interventions, thus NGOs have found that they must participate in the education policy process.

In the four countries studied, international and national NGOs are engaged in changing policy as a consequence of two basic motivations. First, they are involved in specific policies out of necessity. These are pragmatic concerns that result from implementation frustrations. Second, some NGOs, primarily international NGOs, see changing the policy process as part of their mandate. They believe that education would be better if different stakeholders were brought into the picture.

NGO participation in education policy has tended to follow a particular progression. NGOs engage in activities to improve access. To be sustainable or

even implement what was planned, they necessarily must try to encourage government to change policy. As NGOs engage in a policy change strategy, they realize that the policy process is as much the problem as the policies in question. While this progression does not describe the evolution of a specific NGO program in any one country, it broadly describes how NGO thinking in the sector has evolved.

Although NGOs have tallied many successes in changing government policy and even creating mechanisms to do so, finding a formula to change the national policy process has proven to be difficult. Regardless of this difficulty, international NGOs working in the education sector agree that changing the policy process is necessary.

As NGOs intervene in the policy arena, different stakeholders have expressed a range of opinions about this, with very different implications for NGO efforts to affect policy or the policy process. The study found that donors that fund NGO projects have the greatest impact on whether an NGO can successfully pursue its policy agenda. If donors and NGOs are aligned in a strategy to change a particular policy, they constitute a formidable alliance.

Government actors are, of course, also important. Already ambivalent about the domain occupied by NGOs in the education sector, few government officials interviewed in any country studied were particularly enthusiastic about the growing influence of NGOs on education policy. However, in all four cases, government officials have gradually accepted this increasing role. Government officials were generally aware of NGOs' attempts to change specific policies, but were usually less knowledgeable of efforts to change the policy process.

Local stakeholders have not engaged in policy change efforts, and in most cases were unaware of policy change strategies implemented on their behalf, particularly at national levels. This lack of involvement is problematic as they are supposed to be the beneficiaries of policy change. Moreover, stakeholders that have been neglected can constitute a potential threat for NGO strategies to change policy. Unions, political parties, churches, interest groups, and other branches or sectors of government are both potential allies and formidable foes to the policy agenda supported by NGOs.

Our interviews in the four countries helped us identify seven basic strategies used by NGOs to affect policy. These are summarized below:

- ***Policy dialogue*** is a process by which advocates of a particular policy engage in ongoing discussions with decision makers to reach a consensus. Ideally, the advocates use the best data and analysis possible and enable all relevant stakeholders to participate in the deliberations or at least have their perspective considered. This strategy is clearly the method of choice at both national and local levels. In almost all countries, international and national NGOs have attempted to develop better ties with education officials to avoid constraints in program implementation. Early phases of program implementation led to conflict and blockages because local education authorities were not involved in NGO decision-making processes.

- ***Coalition building*** has been used to leverage change and to engage in policy dialogue. Bringing together different NGOs and other stakeholders to present a common front to government has usually been quite effective. However, maintaining these coalitions has proven to be very difficult, particularly when they become distracted with peripheral objectives. Coalitions are also difficult to maintain when they are too successful. If a particular policy agenda is achieved, maintaining the coalition becomes more difficult.

- ***Using donors to leverage policy*** is a common strategy used by a variety of NGOs. Because many NGO programs are financed by bilateral and international donors, they often engage in policy discussions between government and NGOs in order to resolve implementation problems of varying scale. Donors want their programs to succeed and

often have a common policy agenda with NGOs. Risks exist, however, when NGOs depend on donors to help push forward their policy agenda. On one hand, it reinforces the perspective of government and others that the NGOs are an extension of donors, rather than independent actors pursuing their own objectives. On the other hand, donors can be fickle and may abandon NGOs if their interests are not being served.

- ***Using resources to leverage policy change*** is also an important mechanism NGOs used. Sometimes where large amounts of donor resources for the education sector are funneled through the education sector, policy leverage happens by virtue of the sheer size of their programs. In all four countries, NGO-supported sponsorship programs and integrated rural development programs have brought money into local education for many years.

- ***Evidence of NGO program effectiveness*** can influence policy. Demonstration has been used to leverage decision-making. As NGOs conduct policy dialogue or mobilize advocates (donors or other partners) to pressure government, being able to point to irrefutable evidence of program success is certainly a strong argument. However, this strategy can sometimes increase the defensiveness of government actors.

- ***Partnership*** connotes NGOs and government officials working together toward a common goal with complementary responsibilities. NGOs have actively sought partnerships as a strategy to change policy. A key commonality of different types of partnerships found in the four countries is that they are all financed by NGOs. Thus, partnership has invariably meant a transfer of resources from NGOs to government.

- ***Advocacy*** is what most people think about when they consider ways of effecting policy change. The key characteristic is a concerted effort on government officials to change policies through public pressure. However, advocacy has been rarely used as a way to change policy in the four cases. This is not really surprising because policy has not usually changed in these four countries as a product of public pressure, but rather because of other factors.

We have found no certain recipe for what strategy to use where to achieve which policy objective. Nevertheless, the array of strategies that have been used by the NGOs in our cases does indicate how to develop effective approaches to affecting policy. First, policy goals need to be well defined. Second, creating and maintaining relationships with other actors (donors, NGOs, other stakeholders) make it easier to leverage change with government. Third, all strategies required resources; successful education policy change cannot be accomplished inexpensively. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, not one NGO that engaged in successful policy change copied a procedure or strategies used by another NGO. This is even the case with the same international NGO working in several countries. This does not mean that a particular NGO had not learned lessons from the experience of others or its previous adventures in policy change. In fact, observation shaped many of the strategies developed by NGOs. Ultimately, however, effective strategies for policy change were developed as a product of honest analysis of past successes, comprehensive problem solving, and creative thinking.

Lessons Learned

The most important lesson to be learned is that NGOs attempt to influence policy to achieve successful outcomes. Changing government policy and the way that it is formulated is probably the most effective way to ensure the success and sustainability of NGO interventions. We no longer need to "discover" that policy is important for the success of NGO endeavors. NGO projects need to include a policy component as part of their overall implementation strategy.

Second, alliances between the NGO and other actors—other NGOs, donors, and most importantly

government officials—are key to successful promotion of a particular agenda. Although confrontation may have its place, policy change requires substantial effort to nurture and maintain relationships with different education stakeholders.

Third, NGO interventions to change policy have also revealed a significant weakness in NGO programs—they have yet to find a successful formula for changing the policy process to ensure that the public understands, participates in and can influence education policy at different levels. Although NGOs can create linkages with all actors, including grassroots stakeholders, they have not developed effective mechanisms that link these actors together. We want to emphasize the importance of continuing to attempt to change the policy process, regardless of the difficulties encountered to date.

Essentially, NGOs as a group have learned that without fundamentally changing the relations between the beneficiaries and providers of education services, many innovations and improvements that have resulted from NGO involvement will not be sustained. This is the next challenge for NGOs who work in the education sector and for those who support them.

C. NGOs and Donors

The relationship between donors and NGOs has been defined through one of three basic mechanisms. First, donors have issued a request for proposals from NGOs to implement a specific program in the country in question. Usually, the competition is restricted to NGOs (that is, profit-making firms are not allowed to submit a proposal). The second type of arrangement is a contract or agreement resulting from direct in-country negotiations between a donor and an NGO. NGOs do not compete for a pre-determined program in this case. Either a donor asks an NGO to prepare an education program in the desired country that meets the donor's programmatic goals, or, an NGO submits an unsolicited proposal to a donor requesting support for funding, arguing that its existing approach to education supports the donor's objectives. Finally, and more rarely, NGOs might approach a donor (or vice versa) to establish a presence and a program in a particular country. This third type of arrangement defines much of the financing of ***national*** NGOs by donors in the four countries. In this case, donors contract with international or well-established national NGOs to finance the activities of smaller, national NGOs.

In general, contractual relations between donors and international NGOs have become more formal. In the past, education initiatives were at first developed by NGOs using their own resources. Subsequently, many approached donors requesting resources either to scale up or continue their program. This also occurred internationally, as programs in one country served as a model for another. Successes in NGO education sector activity led donors to turn to other NGOs, asking them to develop similar programs. NGOs, seeing this opportunity, began proposing education programs to donors. In the last instance, donors have increasingly used competition as a basis for supporting NGO programs.

This formalization of relations has shaped NGO education programs. First, donors clearly define the role they believe NGOs should play in their education programs. By competing programs with well-delineated results and approaches, donors know exactly what to expect from the program. One unintended consequence of such "clarity," however, is that NGOs become less innovative and experimental—a common justification for their use.

The growing use of intermediary NGOs to work with local NGOs has had positive and negative implications. Donors usually do not have the administrative capacity to contract with and supervise a great number of small NGOs and thus the economy of scale significantly eases the management burden. On the other hand, all relations with local NGOs are always filtered by larger bodies. The lessons learned and realities at local levels will always be filtered by representatives from the intermediary organizations and thus may lose some of their validity and reliability.

Overwhelmingly, our interviewees told us that donors turn to NGOs because they are capable of doing things in the education sector that government

cannot. However, few donors have thought through the long-term implications of having NGOs rather than government services implement certain aspects of their programs. Although most governments have come to accept that NGOs have a certain comparative advantage in chosen domains, no donor representative interviewed for this study clearly indicated what the "future place" of NGOs should be.

Essentially, by framing the role of NGOs as an agent that can do what government is not ***capable*** or ***expected*** to do, donors have perhaps limited the potential involvement of NGOs in the education sector and have even closed off certain avenues for sustainability.

Donor representatives indicated that often it is easier contractually to work with NGOs than with government or contractors to obtain the same result. First, donors find it easier to negotiate with NGOs than with governments because they have exceptional leverage over NGOs who receive their assistance. Moreover, the political "messiness" of negotiating with government is absent, and partners can ignore teacher unions, political parties, bureaucratic hierarchies, corruption, dueling elites, the public, the IMF, and relations with neighboring countries. Second, working with NGOs has certain advantages such as fewer bureaucratic and legal constraints over working through contractors. Some of these advantages are ironically the result of government regulations that restrict the actions of entrepreneurs. In addition, many international NGOs have established a multisector presence within a particular country that is not limited to specific projects and can be mobilized for a new program. Finally, managing grants to NGOs (both local and international) is much easier for a donor like USAID than managing contracts with local or international firms.

NGOs often claim that one advantage they offer is the opportunity to explore and test educational innovations on a limited basis, which can then be generalized by government or donors. However, this particular motivation was not mentioned very often by donor representatives.

Finally, some donor representatives claimed that using NGOs is part of their overall development mandate. The use of national NGOs in particular is construed as way to reinforce civil society.

The two main reasons donors work with international NGOs are greater efficiency and accountability and the ability to work directly with communities. While local NGOs are in a better position to work directly with communities, they rarely have the accountability capabilities demanded by donors. Also, contracting directly with a large number of local NGOs creates managerial burdens that few donors can or want to support.

NGOs usually turn to bilateral and international donors to extend their initial programs. Or they appeal to donors to fund a new program in a particular country or region. In both of these cases, the NGO attempts to generalize a concept or approach that it has found promising. However, when NGOs submit a proposal or application in a competitive process, the reasons for doing so are less clear and as a consequence it has become difficult to differentiate between NGOs and firms or entrepreneurs. Local NGOs that donors tend to support (either directly or through an intermediary) are very similar to consulting firms or small businesses. In all four countries, representatives of national and local NGOs themselves often had difficulty differentiating between an NGO and a firm when asked. This confusion generates conflict among the NGOs that thus become unequal rivals competing for funds.

If the objectives are met, participants in NGO education activities do not care if NGOs are revenue-generating institutions, however, most stakeholders are uncomfortable with this ambiguity.

Typically, negotiations with donors revolve around three basic issues: scope, cost, and agenda. First NGOs and donors will negotiate around issues of the number of sites, their location, and the extent of intervention; and NGOs usually present a more conservative estimate of what they can or want to do. Second, since donors only want to pay for specific activities and results that support their program objectives, and NGOs typically embrace a

wider development vision or agenda, long negotiations occur over what donors are willing to pay. Finally, many NGOs must navigate between what they want to do, according to their own development vision, and what donors expect from them.

One strategy used by many international NGOs to manage the "lack of fit" between their own objectives and strategies and those of donors is to seek funding from a variety of donor sources and even from different parts of the same donor agency.

Aside from competing objectives and priorities, NGOs must also respond to donor demands for accountability. USAID seems to have the most extensive demands for accountability of the donors surveyed. Donors usually expect two types of reporting from NGOs: financial and programmatic. Donors also usually require periodic progress reports that indicate what results have been achieved during any particular period.

Aside from the sheer time that it can take, program related reporting can have an insidious impact on program development or evolution. If the donor is most interested in a certain type of result (e.g., the number of girls dropping out of school), they will require regular reports from NGOs to meet their own accountability necessities. Many interviewees confirmed that such objectives served to orient the objectives and resources of their programs.

Finally, the reporting demands tend to privilege international NGOs over local NGOs on several accounts. International NGOs have often developed systems to support accountability requirements that can be "imported" from one country to another. USAID is noted as having the most extensive demands for accountability and the most onerous and difficult standards for financial management of the donors surveyed.

Not all NGOs, however, seek out bilateral or multilateral donor agencies to fund their programs. In fact, many of the most well-known international NGOs have traditionally financed much of their activities through sponsorships and private donations, e.g., Save the Children, CARE, Plan International, and ActionAid. Many of the international NGO programs discussed in this paper were started without donor funds.

The programs of independently financed NGOs have been free to develop more "process"-oriented programs that aim to create a certain relationship between government and communities, rather than specific educational results. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, these NGOs have increasingly focused their programs on institutional capacity building rather than delivering education results.

The experience of these NGOs brings to light a fundamental difference in the perspective of NGOs and donors as they approach development work. NGOs and donors often operate under different perspectives regarding the time frame for exit. NGOs do not necessarily see themselves as entities that will work themselves out of a job. Local and international NGOs seek a permanent presence that reflects their overall vision of the role of NGOs in society. Although they usually have a keen interest in encouraging sustainability, they also see their program as one that evolves naturally, continually redefining its activities in the sector in accordance with changing needs. Because of their need to account for resources to a constituency, donors seek finite and defined results within the shortest time frame possible. Also, donors cannot espouse an evolving role in society because of evident sovereignty issues.

Lessons Learned

Fundamentally, we have found that the relationship between donor and NGO is a strained one. The higher order objectives of donors and NGOs in the education sector are actually not very different in most cases. Both NGOs and donors are interested in greater access to, equity and quality of education, particularly for the more disadvantaged populations. Differences in strategy and intermediary objectives exist, however, and constitute the key issue in negotiating a relationship between donors and NGOs.

NGOs and donors have an unequal relationship. For those NGOs that have a diversified resource base, in

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terms of finance, people, and infrastructure, these differences can be easily absorbed. NGOs that negotiate with donors from a perspective of relative weakness, have to align themselves more narrowly to the way donors express their own education agenda. This study indicates that few NGOs are free from the need for donor resources. In fact, many NGOs surveyed began programs with their own resources. When they eventually found it necessary to seek new sources of revenue, they turned to donors. Ultimately, this means that NGOs must consider the different paradigm under which donors function. Local and national NGOs must quickly learn the lessons that international NGOs learned some time ago—be professional to be taken seriously by donors.

Donors on the other hand must realize that their need for results and timely and cost-effective execution of projects should not overshadow other benefits of NGOs in the education sector. After all, without NGOs, community schools, alternative pedagogical methods, and school-based community participation may not have existed. And these innovations are now incorporated into new project designs. None of these innovations were hatched from contractual relations between NGOs and donors, but rather were the product of funding arrangements that made little demands on NGOs for accountability or results. In fact, by focusing too narrowly on NGOs as efficient deliverers of services, donors and governments create a context that can blur the distinction between NGOs and the private sector, to the detriment of both.

D. NGOs and Civil Society

In the countries studied, three categories of NGO activities have aimed to impact civil society—programs to empower communities, attempts to build the institutional strength of local NGOs, and support for NGO networks to engage in advocacy for policy change and government commitment. Each actor can "justify" programs that support community participation in different ways—government agents see such efforts as a way to modernize citizenry; donors see this as a way to introduce democratic principles; and international NGOs use community participation to create "empowered" community members. However, programs that reinforce local NGOs can only be substantiated through arguments of democratization or empowerment. Those that support NGO networks essentially aim to empower stakeholders to engage government in policy dialogue—and neither the government nor the donor view it as a civil society strengthening objective.

NGOs use three principal strategies to empower communities or strengthen civil society at the community level.

First, NGOs attempt to change local ***attitudes*** to participating in the education system. For donors and government, this often means that communities become interested enough in education to mobilize their own resources for local schools. Social mobilization campaigns are used to encourage parents to send their children to school and fund school activities. All NGOs claim to implement "participatory techniques" to change local attitudes towards schooling, including the community's relationship to local schools.

Second, NGOs have ***created expectations*** at local levels for increasingly higher quality education. Successful community mobilization has led to a situation where demand for more and better education outstrips the community's capacity, even with international NGO assistance, to meet this demand. The community school has transformed the way citizens relate to the education system. The demands that they now make on their schools will eventually coalesce into demands upon the state for a more responsive school experience.

Third, NGOs have helped ***build organizational capacity*** at the local level. The organization strengthened to accomplish educational tasks can provide a sustainable structure through which communities can make their demands known. A number of NGOs have created school committees or parent organizations as the first step toward creating a community school. They have also trained existing school committees and parent organizations in a variety of ways, from improving skills, such as accounting or the rights and responsibilities of the organization, to more abstract skills, such as

negotiation and building community support. All programs that have supported organizational capacity building at local levels, however, have been confronted with issues of representation.

Most programs that attempt to empower community have had to address two major issues. The first questions whether the interaction between NGOs and communities in fact strengthens communities or whether the NGO is only mobilizing the community to attain certain immediate educational goals. Second, although certain NGOs aim to create a mechanism for mediating between individuals and the state, such efforts have often fallen short of expectations. Although NGOs report that they are also interested in helping parents demand better education, NGOs generally work in isolation seeking self-sufficiency rather than as part of a network of social organizations.

Donors and international NGOs attempt to create stronger local NGOs because they believe that these local institutions can become viable forces to promote change. They believe that supporting local NGO involvement in education will increase the sustainability of education programs. If civil society is an array of organizations and institutions located between the family and the state, then strengthening civic organizations, singly and as networks or alliances, should strengthen civil society in general.

The principal aim of efforts to strengthen local NGOs is to build organizations that will continue to work to expand and improve education whether or not donors or international NGOs remain. Primarily two approaches have been used: either local NGOs are hired as contractors to implement projects managed by international NGOs or the government, or a number of local NGOs are supported by international NGOs to continue their own activities in education. This difference in approach may reflect national differences in NGO involvement in the education sector. One advantage to the latter strategy is that supplementing what local NGOs already do increases their sustainability.

Some NGOs have found that strengthening local NGOs without building linkages among them is inadequate. A wide range of different experiences with NGO networks and alliances were reported in the countries involved in this research. These networks have engaged in policy dialogue with government and in advocacy campaigns. Creating networks of organizations to engage in advocacy is one of the most recent strategies for civil society-building implemented by NGOs. It has become somewhat controversial because they have at times taken up adversarial tactics vis-à-vis government.

Although NGOs have taken very different paths to develop civil society in each country, a number of interesting commonalities serve as lessons for future efforts in this area.

Lessons Learned

First, the essential building block of civil society strengthening is community participation and mobilization. However, experience in all four countries indicates that community participation is insufficient to have an impact on all those factors that affect the quality and the efficiency of educational opportunities at local levels. It is essential for civil society strengthening activities to focus on links between community and other civil society actors located at other levels and the state.

Second, strengthening the institutions that make up civil society requires implementing concrete activities that lead to tangible results. Building an organization for its own sake is never an effective strategy. NGO networks have become strong organizations only when they have had specific issues or policy changes around which to advocate. Organizations need real activities and reasons for existence other than just to become a unit of civil society.

Finally, NGOs and local organizations need an identity that is more substantial than simply an implementer of donor and government projects. If NGOs are nothing more than contractors, they will lose their ability to innovate, create new relationships between community and the state, and transform the nature of the citizen in society.

E. NGOs and Education: A Continual Tension That Can Be Constructive or Destructive

Fundamentally in the education sector, NGOs are uninvited "party crashers" who can either be an irritant to all other guests or surprisingly entertaining additions to what has become a dull party. Which they become depends on their comportment and perspective, as well as that of other "guests."

First, NGOs must understand that they do not necessarily share the same understanding as other guests as to who is actually throwing the party. Specifically, in all four cases, government officials believed that they were responsible for taking the lead in the education sector. When NGOs act as if government is not present, their program objectives are compromised. Indeed, every major NGO working in the education sector has changed its overall strategy to include more collaboration with government in designing, implementing, and monitoring education programs. They have all concluded that it is absolutely necessary to dance with government.

Second, when NGOs come to the party, something about the venue must change to accommodate their presence. NGOs purportedly introduce something new to the sector, and existing education policy will invariably be strained as a consequence. NGOs have several tools available to engage in policy change, each with strengths and weaknesses that depend on the policy change objective and the specific policy environment. Whereas NGOs have been quite successful in changing specific education policies, they have been less successful in changing the policy process. They might be able to influence what music is played and what is served at the party, but they have greater difficulty affecting how and who gets invited. All international NGOs in the education sector have concluded, however, that the policy process must be the target of real and sustainable educational change.

In some cases, donors have driven NGOs to the party. If donors expect to completely control the behavior of NGOs after they arrive, then one wonders why the donors brought them. Donors use NGOs who are easy to deal with because they expect NGOs to deliver something innovative to the education sector. These two objectives require different kinds of relationships between NGOs and donors that are not necessarily compatible. Using NGOs to simply implement tightly prescribed projects may have certain benefits, such as greater assurances of successful implementation. However, the purported benefit of NGO interventions is their innovations and flexibility, features that are certainly muted by an overly strict chaperone.

Finally, NGOs claim that they bring other guests with them that should have been invited in the first place—civil society. However, it is unclear whether these other non-governmental actors (community members, local organizations, and others) have truly joined in the festivities, or remain at the doorstep overshadowed by the international NGOs who have become the life of the party. In all four countries, NGOs and other observers remain perplexed by the fact that little progress has been made on "true" participation or empowerment, suspecting that they may have created a certain dependent relationship with these actors. However, NGOs have increasingly focused resources on experimenting with different ways of achieving civil society objectives, recognizing that this is key to meaningful change in the education sector.

NGO programs in the education sector have matured over the last ten years. Heralded as the panacea to education development impasses or lambasted as a force driven to undermine educational progress, most actors have reached a more levelheaded conclusion as to the costs and benefits of NGO involvement in the sector. One thing is clear—although NGOs have provided many discernible benefits, they have not provided the key to a more sustainable and accountable education system. This said, as a new face on the scene, NGOs have challenged many taken-for-granted notions and have brought innovation to the field of education throughout Africa. As their relationships with governments, donors, and other actors become more institutionalized and comfortable, however, will they simply replicate their existing accomplishments and lose their creative edge? Over time, will NGOs just become another regular guest, repeating old stories to the same old crowd? Or, will they continue to

innovate and help governments communicate better with civil society so as to provide a more sustainable, accountable education system that everyone believes in and supports?

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